In between Fact and Fiction

The Influence of the Pirate Legend on Political Decision-Making During the 'Golden age of Piracy' (1694-1724)

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Abstract

Storytelling and politics have a complicated and intertwining history, especially when looking at the period deemed as the Golden Age of Piracy. Since pirates did not have great military power, they relied on different tactics. By creating stories to scare the merchants they preyed on into surrendering their cargo, they managed to mainly avoid an actual battle. Due to this common practice among pirates it has been increasingly difficult for historians to separate the facts from the legends within primary sources. However, historians have seldom looked at the political implication of these 'pirate legends' and how they were received among the public and the government in their time.

The focus of this research is what these sources, whether semi-fictional or not, imply and how they were used by both the pirates themselves and the government that prosecuted them. This brings us to the question: To what extent did the mythmaking and 'pirate legend' of Henry Every and Edward Teach shape English political decision-making about the prosecution of piracy during the Golden Age of Piracy (1694-1724)?

The issue has been addressed according to the method of Discourse Analysis of multiple and various primary sources concerning both the mythicization of these two pirates and the prosecution of piracy at the time, such as letters, proclamations and newspaper articles. Secondary sources were used in order to create a deeper sense of understanding of historical

context in which these primary sources ought to be read. Furthermore, there has been made use of two case studies, that of Henry Every and Edward Teach (alias Blackbeard) to establish a chronological trend in the influence and usage of narrative of the 'pirate legends' of these two pirates.

Throughout the analysis and discussion of the sources we have found that the English government was not only influenced by the mythicization and 'pirate legend' of Henry Every and Edward Teach with regards to political decision-making concerning the prosecution of piracy, they equally made use of these legends. All in all, a certain trend of progression in the tactics by means of using 'pirate legends' by the English government has been established according to the two case studies, showing an advancement in the using narrative to influence public opinion with regards to piracy.

KEYWORDS: *Pirates, The Golden Age of Piracy, Pirate Legend, Mythmaking, Political Usage of Narrative.*

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Topic introduction

On the 7th of September 1695 Henry Every (alternatively spelled Avery) captured the Ganj-i-sawai, an enormous trading ship filled with treasure and passengers that belonged to the Grand Mughal, Aurangzeb himself.[1] While on the surface, Every's endeavor appears to be nothing more than financial opportunism, his actions had great international political implications and would even open the first global manhunt in history.

As the Mughal Empire (a region known as present-day India) recognized Every's ship as an English vessel, his capture of the Ganj-i-sawai was seen as an act of war on England's behalf. This put England, who highly prized its international relationship and trade with the Mughal Empire in a troubled spot.

A year earlier, Every and his crew had committed mutiny, which had condemned them to being outlaws. The English government had a longstanding system with regards to maritime warfare in which they would hire privateers to wage war against foreign maritime forces. When these operations were successful, the privateers were allowed to keep a part of their spoils. If they weren't, the government had an option of deniability, washing their hands from any of these operations, as the privateers would no longer be protected by English law.[2]

With his mutiny and capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, the now independently operating Every had reversed this power dynamic, causing the English government both political and economic difficulties on the international stage.

It was no wonder Every gained legendary status. Not only to the commonly maltreated and underpaid sailors of the English navy, but also among the poorer English population in general. As C. Woodard puts it 'the Every of legend was a symbol of hope for a new generation of oppressed mariners, as well as a role model for the men who would one day become the most famous and fearsome pirates in history'.[3]

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[1] Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man Who Brought Them Down* (Marine books, 2007) 21.
[2] Janice Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, And Sovereigns* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 22.
[3] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 27.

One of these men, who became an active pirate some twenty years after Every ceased his operations, was Edward Teach (alternatively spelled Thatch). However, he was more commonly known by the alias he created for himself: Blackbeard.

With the Treaty of Utrecht, the Queen Anne's war, which had been fought in both Europe and in Caribbean waters, came to a close in 1713. As the crown was unable to continue financing their maritime operations abroad, many sailors found themselves unemployed, unable to make a living for their families and without any prospect of returning home to England. Aside from that, despite the official ending of the war, there was still a considerable amount of friction between English and Spanish privateers. Therefore many sailors simply continued the operations they had undertaken during the war to be able to financially support themselves. This, however, was now considered to be piracy and therefore illegal since their Letters of Mark had been withdrawn by the crown.[4] Having served as one of these sailors in the Queen Anne's War, Edward Teach quickly found himself among one of the men who were now deemed pirates.

Storytelling and politics have a long and complicated intertwining history and this was no different in the Golden Age of Piracy. Pirates were, by no means, a match against the military power that was the English navy. Therefore they relied on different tactics. Pirates were arguably master storytellers and showmen. Perhaps the most famous example that depicts the use of this practice was Edward Teach; more commonly known in our collective memory as the pirate Blackbeard. Teach succeeded at creating the image of the notorious pirate that still continues to frighten and fascinate us, even three centuries later.

Due to this practice among pirates, historians dedicating themselves to the study of pirate history, find themselves having to work with this inescapable obstacle within the sources. Many studies have thus focused heavily on dismantling pirate 'myths', in which historians attempt to separate fact from fiction in these sources in a noble attempt to uncover the 'truth' of the matter.

Yet, seldomly have historians looked at the political implications these stories or 'myths' had, even regardless of their truth. With this kind of approach, the laborious task of first coming to terms with the quasi-fictive nature of sources written about these pirates can be foregone. Therefore, the focus within this research will shift from distinguishing what can be confirmed as truthful within the primary sources, to what these sources, whether semi-fictional or not, imply

[4] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 86.

and how they were used by both the pirates that created them and by the English government that was set on the prosecution of these pirates.

Research Question

This leads us to the following question:

To what extent did the mythmaking and the 'pirate legends' of pirates Henry Every and Edward Teach shape English political decision-making about the prosecution of piracy during the Golden Age of Piracy (1694 - 1724)?

Within the limits of this thesis there will be an emphasis on the two historical figures, Henry Every and Edward Teach respectively, to see if such a connection between mythmaking and political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy can be made. These two men are arguably among the most well-known and influential pirates of their time and are therefore chosen over lesser known individuals. This, however, will not be a comparison between the two pirates, but will create a chronological timeline along which a certain trend in English political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy can be distinguished.

Relevance

While this study might seem to be of more academic importance, with its specific focus on pirates during the 'Golden Age of Piracy', it could prove to shed some light on the political significance of storytelling in political use and political decision-making. This is still of importance to this day and is arguable, despite sometimes being hard to measure, important to keep in mind when looking at political decision-making. What are the stories and myths that influence our 'zeitgeist', and what does this tell us about how we function as a society?

Specifically, when looking at the case of Henry Every (although to some extent this can be argued for various other pirates) there is a quite unique situation in which there is a shift in power dynamics. The pirates, an individual undertaking, gained a certain international political domination over the English government when they captured the Ganj-i-sawai, thus disrupting international relations between England and the Mughal Empire. The capture of the ship was, after all, viewed as an act of war. This shift in power dynamics makes for an interesting case when considering what the influence and implications of mythmaking and storytelling were when looking at political decision-making.

While considering Every's case as a starting point in this research when looking at the influence and usage of the 'pirate legend' by the English government, the case of Edward Teach, occurring approximately twenty years later, could arguably show us a trend in the usage of narrative by the English government. Also, if there is such a trend, it could show how this usage has changed over the two decades separating Every and Teach.

Thus, this research can mainly tell us something about how mythmaking and storytelling can influence political decision-making as well as how it was used by various parties to achieve their private, political, and/or financial goals. Consequently, in more general terms, this might give us a deeper understanding of political usage of narrative.

Main Theoretical Concepts

Pirate

The term *pirate* in historical context, while seeming deceptively obvious, has several connotations and is fluctuant. The overall definition can be identified as 'a person who sails a ship and attacks other ships in order to steal from them.'[5] However, the same definition can be applied, in essence, to a privateer. Privateers were commissioned by the crown to capture and plunder foreign ships in a time of warfare.[6] This was done by means of a 'Letter of Mark', a certain document which showed that privateers were officially sanctioned by the English government. While making up a part of the English navy, privateers were often independent actors and were hired by the crown.[7] Being thus sanctioned by one government did not, however, exclude privateers from being viewed and condemned as pirates by foreign forces. Also the distinction between times of peace and times of war weren't always as clear.

Therefore, within the context of this thesis, the term *pirate* will solely be applied to a sea-robber who is not sanctioned by any kind of government and is, to be considered an independent actor.

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[5] "Definition 'pirate'," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed January 21, 2025 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pirate.
[6] Chris Land "Flying the black flag: Revolt, revolution and the social organization of piracy in the 'golden age'," *Management & Organizational History* 2, no 2 (2007): 171 and 172, http://doi.org/10.1177/1744935907078726.
[7] Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, And Sovereigns*, 22.

The Golden Age of Piracy

There has been some debate considering the exact delimitation of this concept. Some historians might even argue that the 'Golden Age of Piracy' opened with the undertakings of Sir Francis Drake, while others consider the start of this golden age to be halfway through the 17th century, aligning with the operations of Henry Morgan. Apart from that, there is no clear consensus on whether this 'age' lasted a century, merely half a century, or only a few decades. However, the 'Golden Age of Piracy' does usually entail the turning of the century from the 17th to the 18th century.

For the purpose of this thesis, the 'Golden Age of Piracy' is narrowed down to the timeframe of 1694, the year Every departed from England on the ship the Charles, to 1724, the year of the first publication of *A General history of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson. The primary sources used will also fall within the limit of this timeframe.

Pirate Mythmaking

While often finding its origins in the stories individual pirates told about themselves, the concept of 'pirate mythmaking' has a more complicated nature and cannot simply be reduced to the principle of distortions over time with the influence of different re-tellers.[8] Each individual story has its own history and development over time.

In several cases a 'pirate myth' or 'pirate legend' is created in order to frighten merchants into giving up their cargo, due to the fact that pirates could seldomly outweigh opponents in battle. The more fearsome and horrible they seemed, threatening to torture and kill everyone they came across, the less likely merchants were willing to resist them and risk their lives and those of their crews.

From this point the stories told started to live a life of their own, became open for interpretation, mythicization and common tropes used in storytelling in the 18th century.

This practice, however, makes it increasingly difficult for historians to sort out facts from fiction and forces them to rely on sources from government officials. A far from ideal alternative considering the subjective nature of these sources considering that these officials were the ones

[8] Palmen Ivanov Arnaudov, "Elements of mythmaking in Witness accounts of colonial piracy," (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2008), 3, https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/2713.

prosecuting pirates. Yet the concept of the 'pirate myth' can be useful when looking at the influence 'pirate myths' had, as will be done in this thesis.

Political Use of Narrative

In essence the concept of 'political use of narrative' can be seen as the broader and more encompassing term of 'pirate mythmaking', considering the actual practice can be compared to one another rather well. The use of narrative by government officials to convey a certain message to their citizens, through 'framing' for example, is something that was practiced then and still is today and can be useful to historians when focusing on how governments, institutions or individuals wanted to be viewed.

Within the framework of this thesis there will be an emphasis on how informational tactics are used by government officials, and also by the pirates themselves, to create a certain narrative which they want to convey to others about themselves or their actions.

Literature Discussion

Due to the subjective nature of primary sources available in the field of pirate history within the context of the 'Golden Age of Piracy', many historians tend to focus on the separation between fact and fiction. *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson (on which will be elaborated later) is one of such works. Being published around a time when the pirates depicted were active and its biographical depictions of these individual pirates, make this a dominant source in historical studies with regard to pirates of the 'Golden Age of Piracy'. The line, however, between the reality in which these pirates lived and the author's own make-belief has proven to be extremely thin. It has been the main obstacle and task of historians to pry apart fact and fiction and find the truth among the myths.

By making use of other primary sources, such as logs and letters of navy captains and government officials, historians have attempted to piece together a more truthful account of this part of history; *A General History of the Pyrates* serving as a blueprint throughout this task.

For the purpose of this study, there will be a specific focus on three main literatures that will be engaged with throughout this thesis, in order to get a more distinct grasp of the historical discourse within the subject. First, we will look at pirate mythmaking and the pirate legend, a more general topic that will be the leading thread throughout this study. Then, there will be a

focus on the scholarly discourse considering the two individuals which will be discussed during the analysis of the case studies; namely Henry Avery and Edward Teach.

Pirate Mythmaking

Despite a consistent fascination with pirates in literature, there has been little scholarly interest in the topic of pirates; especially within the scope of a biographical approach. As earlier historians did not concern themselves too much with the distinction between mythicization and facts, it has only been within the last two to three decades since there has been a renewed interest in pirates as an academic subject. It could therefore be argued that the overall task of historians to create a concise history of 'Golden Age' pirates, with a focus on individuals, is still in its infancy.

As Woodard argues, most books and movies regarding pirates simply rely on the conception of the pirate legend that has ingrained its image in our cultural understanding for financial purposes. But these books fail to distinguish between documented and fabricated events and are largely based on *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson.[9]

N. Rennie, agreeing on this point, adds that this creates a distinction between the real and imaginary pirate. Yet, he argues, that this line might not be as clear as it first appears. Pirates were, after all, already somewhat legendary in their respective time.[10] In his work, *Treasure Neverland: Real and Imaginary Pirates*, Rennie aims to separate fact and fiction with regards to individual pirates of the 'Golden Age of Piracy'. The author notes that very few scholarly works succeed in properly analysing primary sources and distinguishing objective facts from popular legends. Even fewer scholars occupy themselves with the representation of pirates within the context of mythicization.[11]

Historians that do follow a more fact-based approach to the topic of pirates, tend to focus on privateers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Individuals like, for example, Henry Morgan, were more commonly accepted in their time, since they were legally sanctioned by the English crown and thus have left a more sizable paper trail for historians to follow. As Woodard notes, these were, however, not true pirates in the same sense the pirates of the 'Golden Age of Piracy' were; unsanctioned by their government.[12]

[9] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 5 and 6.
[10] Neil Rennie, *Treasure Neverland: Real and Imaginary Pirates* (Oxford University Press, 2013) vii.
[11] Rennie, *Treasure Neverland*, vii.
[12] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 6.

This leaves us with merely a handful of, despite being excellent, overviews of piracy in the 18th century in general. Yet, these works focus mainly on piracy as an institution, overlooking the individual lives of specific pirates and leaving specific questions initially raised by *A General History of the Pyrates* still unanswered.[13]

Other historians, like D. Graeber, confirm the fact that it is indeed very difficult to be objective about pirates and proceeds to distance himself from this discussion entirely; focusing instead on the political philosophy of the radical democracy of the pirates during the 'Golden Age of Piracy', specifically focusing on the pirate haven in Madagascar, which far preceded its time; thus, arguing that, to some extent, these pirates laid the foundations for the enlightenment philosophy that was to follow in the eighteenth century.[14] On the general literary discourse considering the topic of pirate history during the 'Golden Age of Piracy', Graeber notes that there is a sizable division within the discourse of seventeenth and eighteenth century piracy. On the one hand, there are historians who take a more positive, perhaps even idealized approach, viewing pirates as anti-heroes and proto-revolutionaries. While on the other hand, there is a more adverse assumption among historians that simply summarizes pirates as blatant murderers, rapists and thieves.[15]

Historian and former Navy SEAL, B. Little, also set on uncovering the truth behind the mythicization of pirates in his work *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Truth Behind Pirate Myths*, focuses more on, as Woodard previously mentioned, the institution of piracy during the 'Golden Age of Piracy'.[16] However, despite pointing out the naïvité of other historians, with regards to their often more romantic viewpoints, Little's main argument is that the truth behind these myths and legends might even be more colorful than the caricature we know from the stories in our collective historical consciousness.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is a heavy emphasis within the scholarly discourse considering pirate myths on distinguishing fact from fiction.

The Legend of Henry Every

[13] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 6.
[14] David Graeber, *Pirate Enlightenment, or the Real Libertalia* (Allen Lane, 2023) 3.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Benerson Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy: The Truth Behind Pirate Myths* (Skyhorse Publishing, 2016).

Perhaps one of the most obvious and colorful 'pirate legends', among both authors of fictional works and pirate historians, is that of Henry Every. Not only could he arguably be viewed as the individual who gave the opening shot for the 'Golden Age of Piracy' that was to follow the next three decades, he was also a 'true' pirate, in the sense that he was not sanctioned by any government. His actions had a great impact on an international level. His legend had perhaps an even greater one on English society as a whole. Every, as Rennie eloquently put it, lived two lives. He inhabited both the actual 'Golden Age of Piracy' and the one of our imagination.[17]

It is not to say that Every could, in fact, be deemed a hero. Many authors, among whom Woodard, point out the rape and murder that followed the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai; let alone the burning and pillaging in which Every and his crew took part during their year sailing the Indian Ocean.[18]

Yet, it could be argued that this might be exactly why his legend was even more meaningful than the actual events themselves. The actual operations Every conducted could be undertaken by anyone, but what they represented for the poorer part of English society, and sailors in particular, was exceptionally significant. This makes the Every of history and his legend inseparable and inherently interlinked. He is ambiguous in both his authenticity as well as in his morality and functions as an inspiration to men who would follow in his footsteps as pirates only a few decades later and to authors of fictional works.[19]

S. Johnson states that Every's legend also inspired Edward Teach and other individual pirates, deeming his legend in the simplest manner 'the story of a rogue pirate and his sensational crime'.[20] The author depicts Every's life with a more biographical approach, supplementing gaps within the source material with general information of the time period itself. In his work, *Enemy of All Mankind: A True Story of Piracy, Power, and History's First Global Manhunt*, the author aims to measure the impact of Every's actions, and tells the story of the individuals such as Henry Every and the men associated with him, but also considers the forms of social organizations, institutions and new media platforms.[21]

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[17] Rennie, *Treasure Neverland*, 1.
[18] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 23.
[19] Rennie, *Treasure Neverland*, 1.
[20] Stephen Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind: A True Story of Piracy, Power and History's First Global Manhunt* (Riverhead Books, 2020) 7.
[21] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 7.

R. Frohock continues this line of reasoning, but takes it a step further, focusing on Every's myth as a platform for philosophical and political concerns of the period.[22] In his essay, *The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery*, he analyses the literary treatments of Every's story as a platform for thought on fundamentals of English society in the eighteenth century.[23] In other words, the author will consider how certain ideas common in English society were projected onto the legend of Henry Every and what this can tell us about the English society in the eighteenth century itself. Frohock argues that Every's legend demonstrates the possibilities and challenges of managing civil order; and with a specific focus on how a government can succumb to corruption over time.[24] This, the author notes, could be viewed as a common conception within societal thought of the 18th century, which was subsequently deduced from the Every myth.[25]

Frohock elaborates his argument by briefly summarizing other possible societal conceptions that can be distinguished among the interpretations of eighteenth century society by other historians. Firstly, another common idea was that Every represented a 'working-class hero', which could fall into the category of protest lore. A second notion is that the legend was designed to represent the means by which a mercantile class can rise to wealth and power. Thirdly, Every's story could simply be seen as a celebration of the 'adventure of individualism'. Pirate narratives, Frohock writes, were thus an excellent platform for the projection of the larger issues of the age.[26]

All in all, it can be said that with regards to Henry Every, the legend could arguably be deemed as equally important as factual events in history; considering the interpretations of his myth can tell us more about the larger issues at play in eighteenth century English society.

The Mythicization of Edward Teach

A pirate that is perhaps even more notable in our collective historical memory is Edward Teach. It almost goes without saying that, in a sense, Edward Teach carried on the legacy that lay in the wake of Every's legend. Being branded as a 'notorious pirate' and a 'wicked villain', whether

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[22] Richard Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," *Humanities* 9, no 6 (2020): 2.
Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates,* 6.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.

this being truthful or not, aligned with the manner in which Every was portrayed by English government officials and made an equal impact on English society.

An opening argument P. Huebner cited from historian M. Rediker illustrates this point further. Approximately five thousand pirates operated in the Caribbean at the same time as Edward Teach, yet out of all these individuals he is the one best remembered and arguably most famous of them.[27] Huebner argues that the initial reason for the fame and recognition attributed to Edward Teach was due to the creation of his image as Blackbeard, which was partly created by the man himself, partly by others.[28]

A common notion among historians with regards to creating a certain image or myth, individual pirates appearing as fierce or violent, was economically advantageous; aiming to strike fear into the merchant captains they encountered as to avoid battle.[29] It is therefore considered that Edward Teach was exceptionally talented at this part of his job. His notorious reputation led to the avoidance of any actual violent confrontations. Little agrees with this line of argumentation, going as far as to claim that it is, in fact, not even known whether Blackbeard ever fought an actual battle, that pirates are often commonly accused and known for, except for his last one which he lost at Ocracoke Inlet against Lieutenant Robert Maynard and two Virginia sloops, leading to his subsequent defeat.[30]

However, Huebner writes that examining the myth of Edward Teach through a merely economic lens would fall short in explaining how this myth was created and used by the pirate.[31] In his paper, *The Man behind the Beard: Unpacking the Myth and Reality in Blackbeard Imagery*, Huebner examines the different factors that contributed to the creation of the myth of Blackbeard. The main argument that is made, one that Little confirms in his own work, considers that, apart from the economically advantageous explanation for the mythicization of Edward Teach, the pirate captain was also at the mercy of his own crew. As Little explains, pirates during the 'Golden Age of Piracy' operated democratically. Crews were able to vote their captains into office, but could simultaneously vote them out of office. This led to the fact that pirate captains

[27] Philip Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard: Unpacking the Myth and Reality in Blackbeard Imagery" (B.A. Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire), 5, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1793/68423.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 48.
[31] Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard," 5 and 6.

had a rather limited authority; except in battle.[32] Creating a frightful image would not only serve to inspire fear among the vessels he preyed on, but also among his own crew.

Additionally, Teach's myth was enhanced by several others. Government officials used his myth and his frightfully violent reputation to serve their own agendas, legitimizing the prosecution of pirates. Others, the author of *A General History of the Pyrates* Captain Charles Johnson for example, used and enhanced his myth for their own commercial and financial gain.

Despite the efforts of historians to dismantle the myth of one of the most famous pirates, it still remains a difficult task. As pirate historian B. Brooks argues, the mythicization of Blackbeard was often used for the political gain of others. Either to draw attention to certain issues considering political thought of the eighteenth century or avert attention, shifting focus away from the corruption of colonial government officials and toward the criminal and violent image of the pirates.[33] In his work, *Quest for Blackbeard: The True Story of Edward Thache and his World*, Brooks sets out to construct a more trustworthy history, exclusively based on primary sources; hereby leaving the legend behind.

Thus, it can be argued that, apart from the more simplistic explanation of economic advantage, Blackbeard's myth was also targeted at his own crew to maintain his status and authority as captain. Eventually, the myth was not only used by Teach, but also by others in order to legitimize the prosecution of pirates or to enhance the legend for individual commercial gain.

Innovative aspects

Many historians studying pirate history are confronted by the fictional aspects that have slipped into primary sources, written by contemporaries of the pirates to enhance their own stories and make them more exciting. While undoubtedly having served the artistic, and probably mainly financial, purposes of their writers, it remains a difficult task for historians to decide where to draw the line between fact and mythicization.

Yet, it can be argued that the overlapping aspects of fact and fiction within the context of this topic does not necessarily have to be pried apart in order to get a better, or rather, a more objective understanding of this history. On the contrary. The very practice and use of creating

[32] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 46.
[33] Baylus C. Brooks, *Quest for Blackbeard: The True Story of Edward Thache and his World* (Lulu Press, 2017).

pirate legends and mythmaking might tell us more about the culture and politics of both the pirates and the attitude of the English government towards piracy during the 'Golden Age of Piracy'.

Despite the works of many historians who have dedicated themselves to delving into the myths considering the pirates of the 'Golden Age of Piracy', this study will take it one step further; taking a more formative or 'meta' approach to this history and look at what these legends, and more particularly the practice and usage of their creation, can tell us about the pirates of the 'Golden Age of Piracy' and the political implications these myths and legends had. Not only will this approach grant us an insight and deeper understanding of the political environment and social connotations of the 18th century with regards to piracy and pirates during the 'Golden Age of Piracy', but also create an opportunity to look at the function and implication of mythmaking and storytelling within the context of political decision-making.

Thesis sources

The nature of the primary sources used in this thesis can be categorized, will be discussed and analysed within the frame of the two case studies, as follows:

Documents by government officials

These sources will be an interpretation of the pirates by those who persecuted them. They consist of proclamations, official reports, letters, logs and trial documents. A good example of such a source that will be used is the *Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and sundry other Pirates*.[34] This source was issued by government officials in 1696, when Henry Every and his crew had supposedly returned to England. It can be deduced from the text itself that the government is determined to capture Every and his crew as swiftly as possible. When focusing on the perception of Every (and pirates in general) by government officials, this source in particular and other documents by government officials in general can be useful.

[34] "Proclamation for apprehending Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and sundry other pirates." (Edinburgh: Printed by the heirs and successors of Andrew Anderson, Printer to his most excellent Majesty, Anno Dom. 1696.) in the digital collection Early English Books Online Collections. Accessed January 9, 2025 https://name.umdl.umich.edu/B05636.0001.001.

Another source of a similar nature is *A Proclamation by the King for Suppressing of Pirates*, published in the London Gazette in 1717. By both issuing pardons for pirates, but also continuing the prosecution of piracy simultaneously, the source showcases a specific tactic used by the English government in both the apprehension of pirates and the control in narrative with regards to the public's conception of pirates.

The most common limitation that arises when using this source is that they are written by those who are often opposed to the pirates they wrote about in these documents, and therefore tend to have an inherent negative view. Within the framework of this research, however, this is not necessarily an obstacle, since the focus will be on *how, why and by whom* the source is written instead of *what* was written. The manner in which a source describes certain individual pirates, or piracy in general for that matter, whether positively or negatively, can tell us something about the usage of narrative and the aims of the producers of the source.

Books and plays about pirates

These sources will be an interpretation of the pirates by various other, authors and playwrights. They consist of (fictional or partly fictional) books and plays and will give an impression of society's interpretation of the pirates. These sources consist of works such as *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar* and *The Successful Pyrate* by Charles Johnson (not to be confused with Captain Charles Johnson). [35] A good example of such a source that will be used is *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson. While being the main and most commonly used primary source among pirate historians, it cannot be fully relied upon, due to the fact that this work is steeped in fiction to enhance the pirate legends.

Additionally, Captain Charles Johnson was a pen name and his true identity still remains a mystery. It has long been thought by historians that Daniel Defoe was the author of *A General History of the Pyrates* because of Defoe's interest in sea-farers; as apparent in his novels *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Adventures of Captain Singleton*. This conception has, however, been

[35] "The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabin-Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar. Printed in London, 1709," Internet Archive, accessed June 9, 2025, https://archive.org/details/bim_eighteenth-century_the-life-and-adventures-_broeck-adrian-van_1709. "The Successful Pyrate by Charles Johnson. Printed for Bernard Lintott at the Cross-Keys, between Two Temple-Gate in Fleetstreet: 1713," Internet Archive, accessed June 9, 2025, https://archive.org/details/bim_eighteenth-century_the-successful-pyrate-a_johnson-charles_1713.

rebutted by historians such as Bialuschewski, who claim that the author of *A General History of the Pyrates* was Nathaniel Mist, an associate of Defoe, Jacobite and editor of a political newspaper called *Mist's Weekly Journal* in which he propagated his anti-whig affinities.[36]

Nevertheless, *A General History of the Pyrates*, although having to be used with care, can be a useful source when looking at the general portrait of pirates in the 18th century, since this was a rather popular work at the time.

Documents produced by pirates themselves

While these are scarce, considering it was not a common practice among pirates to leave detailed accounts of their operations since this could easily be used against them if caught, there are some known and available sources that are produced by the pirates themselves. A good example of such a source that will be used is *The Open Letter from Henry Avery*.[37] In this letter, Every addresses 'all English Commanders', telling them that he has taken control of the ship Charles and then continues to explain his intentions.

Despite this being , it also creates a certain image of Every; or at least, how he would like to be viewed by the readers of this 'open letter'. Thus making this a useful source when looking at the image Every portrayed of himself and offers a balance to the sources, such as governmental documents.

Methodology

The method that will be used throughout this thesis is the method of Discourse Analysis. As stated in the chapter on Discourse Analysis by E. Narmino in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences: An A-Z of Key Concepts* by J.F. Morin, C. Olsson and E. Ö. Atikcan, Discourse Analysis roughly implies the analysis of 'the broad semantic and symbolic fields within which social beings make sense of and represent the world around them, thus constantly absorbing, refuting, producing, and reproducing socially relevant meanings.'[38] Since Discourse Analysis

[36] Anri Bialuschewski, "Daniel Defoe, Nathaniel Mist, and the "General History of the Pyrates"," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98, no 1 (2004): 22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24295828.
[37] Steven Johnson, "Henry Every's open letter," in *Enemy of All Mankind: A True Story of Piracy, Power and History's First Global Manhunt* (Riverhead Books, 2020).
[38] Elisa Narminio, "Discourse Analysis: Breaking Down Ideational Boundaries in the Social Sciences," in *Research Methods in the Social Sciences: An A-Z of Key Concepts* ed. Jean-Frédéric Morin, Christian Olsson, Ece Özlem Atikcan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) 89.

focuses not specifically on the subject, but rather the context and the subtext of the source, this method will be useful when distinguishing the influence 'pirate legends' had on political decision-making by the English government with regards to the prosecution of piracy; considering that such statements are not be explicitly mentioned in the primary sources in question. Secondary sources will be used in order to place the primary sources into historical context and gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of how these sources ought to be read and what could be deduced from the language used throughout these sources.

The thesis will make use of two case studies. Focusing specifically on mythmaking and 'pirate legend' of Henry Every and Edward Teach and to what extent this mythmaking implied with regards to political decision-making by the English government in the prosecution of piracy during the 'Golden Age of Piracy'. The question that will subsequently be answered within the two chapters, each covering a case study, will be as follows: To what extent can mythmaking of the individual pirate (Henry Every and Edward Teach) be brought into context of English political decision making considering the prosecution of piracy? The selection of these two individuals in particular is due to the fact that both of them were popular in their time (arguably even today), are well-known for their distinguishable image and the famous legends surrounding them. However, the use of the two case studies is not based on a comparison between the two, but will create a chronological time frame.

According to this chronological time frame a certain trend can be shown considering political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy by the English government. By means of this approach a certain change in the extent to which the government was influenced by these 'pirate legends' can be established. This could arguably show us how both the influence and usage of narrative with regards to political decision-making developed over the period of 1694 to 1724.

When looking at specific primary sources, both documents of government officials and sources produced by individuals with a more creative approach to the subject of pirates (for example *A General History of the Pyrates*), previous research of pirate historians that put their emphasis on dividing fact from fiction can be very useful when distinguishing whether political decisions were based on either fact or fiction; or in some cases both.

The first analytical chapter will focus on the case study of Henry Every and his 'pirate legend'. The main question that will be answered is: to what extent did the myth making and the 'pirate legend' considering Henry Every influence political decision-making of the English government in the eighteenth century with regards to the prosecution of piracy? Several primary sources will be analyzed and discussed according to the works of various historians, distinguishing a certain trend in the use of these myths and to come to an eventual answer to this question. When analysing the primary sources individually, a summary of the content of the source itself will be given, then several notable aspects within the text will be briefly discussed before discussing the overall text, the history of the document and its possible influence.

The chapter will be separated into two parts. The first part will cover four specific primary sources that were produced during the period when Henry Every was still active, approximately from 1694 to 1696. These will consist of *Henry Every's Open Letter*, *A Copy of Verses*, *Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and sundry other Pirates* and *The Tryals of Joseph Dawson et. others For several Piracies and Robberies By them committed, in the Company of Every the Grand Pirate*.[39] The second part will discuss three primary sources that were produced after the period in which Henry Every was active; thus, approximately since 1696. These will consist of *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar*, *The Successful Pyrate* by Charles Johnson and the chapter *of Captain Avery and his Crew* in *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson (not to be confused with the playwright).[40] Due to the both the limits of this research and the abundance of secondary

[39] Johnson, "Henry Every's open letter".
"A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Every, Lately Gone to Sea to seek his Fortune To the Tune of, The two English Travellers," WikiSource, Accessed January 27, 2025. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Copy_of_Verses,_Composed_by_Captain_Henry_Every,_Lately_Gone_to_Sea_to_seek_his_Fortune.
"Proclamation for apprehending Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and sundry other pirates. Printed by the heirs and successors of Andrew Anderson, Printer to his most excellent Majesty, Anno Dom. 1696," Early English Books Online Collections, Accessed January 9, 2025, https://name.umdl.umich.edu/B05636.0001.001.
"The Tryals of Joseph Dawson, Edward Forseith, William May, William Bishop, James Lewis, and John Sparkes for several piracies and robberies by them committed in the company of Every the grand pirate, near the coasts of the East-Indies, and several other places on the seas : giving an account of their villainous robberies and barbarities : at the Admiralty sessions, begun at the Old-Baily on the 29th of October, 1696, and ended on the 6th of November," Early English Books Online, Accessed January 9, 2025, https://name.umdl.umich.edu/A63217.0001.001.
[40] Internet Archive, "The Life and Adventures".
Internet Archive, "The Successful Pyrate by Charles Johnson."

literature found focussing on the primary sources that were produced after 1696, these will be discussed according to secondary literature, giving a more general overview of both its content and the divergence they show to have from the four formerly mentioned primary sources that were produced when Every was still active.

The second analytical chapter will consider the case study of Edward Teach and his 'pirate legend' or mythicization. The main focus will be on to what extent his 'pirate legend' influenced political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy by the English (and in this case specifically, the English colonial) government. Apart from that, we will look at the shift in the usage of narrative by the English (colonial) government and how this has developed since the case of Henry Every.

Considering this was an important aspect of the mythicization of Edward Teach, there will first be a discussion considering the creation, reason and usage of his persona as Blackbeard. This will be done according to secondary literature by various authors. Furthermore, there will be an analysis of four primary sources, which will consist of *of Captain Teach alias Black-beard* in *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson, *By the King, A Proclamation, for Suppressing of Pirates* in The London Gazette, *A Proclamation, Publishing the Rewards given for apprehending, Or killing, Pyrates* by Alexander Spotswood and *The Letter from Captain Maynard*.[41] When looking at these sources, the same approach will be taken as in the previous case. The analysis will start with a short introduction of the source and its historical context, followed by a summary, notable aspects within the text and a discussion of the source according to various historians.

As stated before, there is no direct intent to compare the case studies of Every and Teach, mainly for the simple reason they are different individuals. The intention of looking at these two case studies is to establish a chronological time frame in order to determine whether a certain

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Daniel Defoe, "Chapter I of Captain Avery And his Crew," *The General History of the Pyrates* ed. Manuel Schonhorn (Dover Publications, 1972).

[41] Daniel Defoe, "Chapter III of Captain Teach alias Blackbeard", in *The General History of the Pyrates* ed. Manuel Schonhorn (Dover Publications, 1972).

"By the King A Proclamation for Suppressing of Pirates" The Gazette, accessed June 9, 2025 https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/5573/page/.

Daniel Defoe, "A Proclamation, Published the Rewards given for apprehending, Or Killing Pyrates by A. Spotswood" in *A General History of the Pyrates* ed. Manuel Schonhorn (Dover Publications, 1972) 78-79.

Baylus C. Brooks, "Letter of Captain Maynard," in *Quest for Blackbeard: The True Story of Edward Thache and his World* (Lulu Press, 2016), 545 and 546.

change in both the governmental political decision-making and the manner in which pirate legends were created can be distinguished. However, considering Teach became active as a pirate approximately twenty years after the crew of Every was convicted for their crimes, the case of Edward Teach can not simply be viewed in a vacuum. There are undeniably aspects of political views or manners in which the government perceived Henry Every that ended up having an effect on how Edward Teach was perceived, despite the differences of circumstances. Therefore, there might be some overlap with regards to patterns or regulations in political decision making of the English and English colonial government, but this is not to say that the two individuals are compared to one another.

Chapter 2: the Case of Henry Every

In this first analytical chapter there will be a focus on the case study of Henry Every, who was active as a pirate from 1694 to 1696, and the influence his 'pirate legend' had on the political decision-making by the English government with regards to the prosecution of pirates. As will soon be substantiated, Every's 'pirate legend' did not merely have an influence on political decision-making. The workings of this phenomenon will be discussed at length according to several primary sources. By looking at these sources, how they reached a wider public and were used or misused by the government, we can establish where the mythicization of Every began and how it developed in its earliest stages. These sources demonstrate a concrete picture of how they have influenced both the public's and government's perception of pirates or the perception of Every particular.

Apart from that, there will be an establishment of the trend that can be seen throughout the discussed primary sources, with regards to the political context of the sources and usage of narrative of Every's 'pirate legend'.

Influence of the 'pirate legend' on political decision-making

Firstly, we will look at *Henry Every's Open Letter*. Being one of few sources produced by pirates themselves, this makes for a unique source to begin our analysis. Due to the illegality of their operations they were not keen on leaving a paper trail. As can be distinguished at the bottom of the letter it was written in February 1695, 9 months since the mutiny at Corunna (Spain) and Every had now been sailing the renamed Fancy along the African coast.

The letter opens with the preamble addressing 'all English Commanders' and mentions that *the Charles*, which had departed from Corunna on the 7th of May 1694 has been renamed *the Fancy*.[42] The ship now has 46 guns and a crew of 150 men, on their way to seek their fortunes. Every notes that he has never wronged any English or Dutch ship, or ever intends to while he is in the position of commander. He does, however, emphasise that his men are 'hungry Stout and Resolute', insinuating that he does not have absolute control over his crew or the decisions they intend to make. Should they act on their desires, he will not be able to 'help [him]selfe'. Closing off the letter he reassures the reader that he is and will remain an

[42] Johnson, "Henry Every's open letter".

'Englishman's friend', followed by the note that it was written on February 28th of 1695. Additionally Every mentions there are about 160 armed French men at Mohilla who are waiting for any opportunity to capture ships and that the reader should take care of themselves.

Perhaps the most striking about this source is the usage of language, which appears not to be overly aggressive. Stating a desire to remain on friendly terms with the English and even offering words of warning to the reader at the closing of the letter concerning armed French ships at Mohilla. Despite this, however, it does not shy away from noting factual information and the intentions of the crew members aboard the Fancy. The letter seems to convey that Every was well aware of the position he was in; being both an outlaw after having committed a mutiny, but also attempting to remain on good terms with England, since he knows he is no match for the military power of the English navy, and additionally having little control over the men in his crew.

It can thus be argued that through the letter Every seems to attempt to manage both the relationship between himself, the other mutineers and the English 'Commanders', portraying himself neither as victim or perpetrator of the events. This makes for an interesting dynamic and nuance that is often overlooked within the discourse of legends and mythicization of Every.

This ties in with Johnson's argument, stating that the letter encapsulates the duality of Every's reality. He now finds himself outside the boundaries of English laws, offering him a certain degree of freedom, meanwhile is also no longer under the protection of said laws.[43] By appealing to the English Commanders to whom he addressed his letter he attempts to continue to walk this thin line between English friend and outlaw. The letter demonstrates Every to be a man who does not simply renounce codes, a conception easily made and often used, but one who tries to adapt quickly to his current situation.[44] Through the language used it is obvious he tries to come across as reasonable and a 'friend' to the English in an obvious attempt to buy himself and his crew members more time.

An interesting aspect, brought forth by Johnson is that Every's declaration is untruthful. Johnson notes that Every had, in fact, captured English ships. The author points out that historian J. Baer views Every's Open Letter as a tactic to avoid conflict with the English navy and the East India Trading Company, who's military power outmatched that of the Fancy.[45] In this sense, it

[43] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 106.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 105 and 106.

could be added that he might also be trying to avoid conflict with his own crew on which Every is dependent, shielding both his men and himself from responsibility from their actions.

As Johnson closes his argument, there is a certain threat, however subtle, detectable within the last few lines of the letter: 'my Men are hungry Stout and Resolute: & should they Exceed my Desire I cannot help my selfe.'[46] While Johnson interprets this line purely as a threat, it can likewise be viewed as a tactic the English government was rather familiar with at the time with regards to hiring and finance privateering operations; namely that of deniability. Through this kind of description of his men, Every places himself both in between his crew and the English navy, and also partly outside of the conflict by stating that he has no complete control of his men and is therefore at the mercy of their desires.

All in all, it can be argued that the source gives a very nuanced portrayal of the actual historical Every in contrast to, as we will soon distinguish in the following discussion of other sources, the Every of legend, who seems far more determined and less cautious in his statements toward the English government.

The second source that will be discussed is *A Copy of Verses Composed by Captain Henry Every Lately Gone to Sea to seek his Fortune (To the Tune of, The two English Travellers)*.[47] It was printed for Teophilus Lewis in 1694. J. H. Baer explains the original manuscript of the ballad can be dated somewhere between the 7th of May and the 10th of August of the same year.[48]

The *Copy of Verses* was the first piece of information with regards to Every's activities to reach London.[49] Therefore, it can be argued that it might well have had influence on the public's perception and by extension the English government of Henry Every. Especially since the ballad sets a certain distinct tone of defiance and rebellion, which is likely to have drawn some attention. Also, since it arrived before Every's Open Letter it is probable that the more nuanced tone of the letter, by Every himself, would have been overshadowed by the more sensational narrative displayed through the *Copy of Verses*.

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[46] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 105 and 106.
[47] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses, Composed by Captain Henry Every."
[48] Joel Baer, "Bold Captain Avery in the Privy Council: Early Variants of the Broadside Ballad from the Pepys Collection", *Folk Music Journal* 7, no 1 (1995): 8, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4522500.
[49] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 79.

The ballad consists of thirteen verses of four lines each with an AABB rhyming schedule. The first is written in first person, giving the illusion that Every is addressing the reader or listener directly. Encouraging 'brave Boys' to join him in Corunna, where his mutiny had taken place.[50] The second verse, however, is written in third person, portraying Every as a character in a story.[51] The third verse continues the description of the Fancy, while the fourth verse once again shifts to first person.[52] One might argue that this is once again Every narrating the story, but with the diversion of writing in the third person, it now gives the impression that the author of the ballad might be one of Every's crew members. The rest of the ballad continues in first person. The writer gives some insights of his, and by extension Every's, intentions in sailing South and gives specific numbers on how many men are aboard the Fancy.[53] Throughout the rest of the ballad the author mentions to remain loyal to the moral standards of England, but that England itself has forsaken them.[54] He will show no mercy to whomever will show no mercy to them and he sees himself and the others of the crew as irredeemable.[55] The ballad closes with some kind of plea, a question for forgiveness. However, this is only one line after describing England as a 'false-hearted Nation'.[56] Perhaps this might be interpreted as asking forgiveness and asking for sympathy from the audience.

During the seventeenth century it was a common practice throughout Europe's major cities that political news, tales and crime narratives, such as the *Copy of Verses* were communicated and conveyed through song. With the new technological advantage of printing becoming more prominent, Johnson writes, these songs were often accompanied by printed text versions and woodcut illustrations in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century.[57] Johnson also notes that, from the moment the ballad reached London, Every started to lead two lives. One of the person who was currently sailing the coast of Africa, the other who had taken on the form of a legend.[58] Both as a 'Robin Hood'-like figure and notorious villain. Within the context of the ballad, Every is portrayed as a *hostis humani generis*, an enemy of all mankind, writes Frohock. Someone who decisively breaks away from English society and rebels against the English

[50] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 9.
[51] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 13 to 16.
[52] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 17 to 20 and 21 to 24.
[53] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 27.
[54] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 41 and 42.
[55] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 53 and 54.
[56] WikiSource, "A Copy of Verses," line 58 and 59.
[57] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 79 and 80.
[58] Johnson, *Enemy of All Mankind*, 82.

government.[59] This kind of personification subsequently is also seen in *The Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Avery*, as shall be discussed later.[60]

Baer continues within this line of argumentation, though underlines the complexity that is often missed by historians when looking at the *Copy of Verses*.[61] The mutiny of the Charles at Corunna gave rise to an inquiry in the Privy Council (a formal body of advisors to the King of England) of the 16th of August in 1694. The investor of the enterprise, James Houblon, presented the documents among which was the original version of the *Copy of Verses*, likely to have been sent along with the letters of a sailor at Coruna to his wife.[62] Claiming that Every had left the *Copy of Verses* behind for the authorities to find, Houblon used the ballad equally to his advantage in the case, emphasizing Every's villainous nature and a confirmed pirate from the start.[63]

Therefore, it can be argued that, not only was the English government influenced by the legend and mythicization of Henry Every, they made active use of it. This is a kind of phenomenon that we will continue to see throughout the other primary sources.

The *Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and sundry other Pirates* was published on the 18th of August in 1696 and was printed in Edinburgh by Andrew Anderson. This source shows the government's reaction considering Every's acts of mutiny and piracy on the Indian Ocean and demonstrates the political consequences of Every's capture of the Ganj-i-sawai. Throughout the document a certain tone of serious determination from the English government to apprehend Every can be read. This can specifically be distinguished in the terms used to describe Every and his crew and the tactics used for their apprehension. The argument can therefore be made that, according to the usage of these terms, the government made use of the narrative shown in the *Copy of Verses* to display the 'ill-will' of these pirates towards England.

The source opens with common formalities. King William (in full title) addresses the Privy Council, messengers at arms and sheriffs. The *Proclamation* begins with the statement that Henry Every, alias Bridgeman, and several others, among whom Englishmen, Scotsmen and

[59] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution," 2 and 3.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Baer,"Bold Captain Avery in the Privy Council," 4.
[62] Baer,"Bold Captain Avery in the Privy Council," 4 and 6.
[63] Baer,"Bold Captain Avery in the Privy Council," 10.

other Foreigners, have come under the attention of the crown, due to their crimes.[64] This is followed by a description of those crimes including the mutiny at Corunna, the theft of the Charles, now renamed the Fancy and the acts of piracy in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf under English colors.[65] There is a short mention that Every had sailed to New Providence Island in the Bahamas, but has now returned to England. The Proclamation tells the reader the number of men aboard the Fancy, 'about One Hundred and Thirty', and the number of guns, which is forty six.[66] The source, emphasizing the seriousness of their crimes and the threat they pose, informs the reader authorities are now looking for these men and encourages the English public to do the same.[67] This is followed by a list of names of Every's supposed crewmembers, among whom are Joseph Dawson and James Lewis (whose names will appear in the trial document of 1696 which will be discussed later).[68] The source goes on to give a general description of the men, mentioning that they could be recognized by the large amounts of gold or silver they carry on their persons.[69] They are to be delivered to the magistrate to be kept in custody until they are convicted and punished for their crimes.[70] This instruction is followed by the information concerning the reward one might receive for capturing Every or any of his crew members and delivering them to the authorities.[71] Additionally, the source notes that the government offers compensation for any loss or harm done during the capture and deliverance of Every and/or any of his crew members.[72] However, it is stressed that anyone who tries to aid or harbor Every or any of his crew members listed above shall likewise be punished.[73] The *Proclamation* closes the notation of the date and finally with 'God Save the King'.[74]

Despite the fact that this particular source is touched upon by various authors within the context of the history of Henry Every, it has not yet been examined alongside or as supplement to his legend. The source vilifies Every and his crew members, both through the usage of direct

[64] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 3 to 7.
[65] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 7 to 12.
[66] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 6 and 7.
[67] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 12 to 17.
[68] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 17 to 20.
[69] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 21 and 22.
[70] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 22 to 25.
[71] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 27 and 29.
[72] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 31 and 32.
[73] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 34 and 35.
[74] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 40 to 43.

terms and through the usage of information like the mention of compensation for any loss or harm done during capture, indicating the violent nature of these men. Apart from that, a certain kind of strategic use of information can be distinguished throughout the source. The description of the men detailing that they carry large quantities of 'Indian Gold and Silver', the person who captures Every or the other crew members is offered five hundred pounds sterling for Every and fifty pounds sterling for the other crew members each, and there will be a compensation if any harm or loss is done during the capture, makes it rather appealing to the public to initiate a manhunt. There is an abundant usage of terms like 'Heinous and Notorious Offenders', 'Horrid villany' and 'Notorious Rogues', which can be interpreted as direct terms to vilify Every and his crew.[75]

It becomes apparent that the source displays the seriousness and the eagerness of the English government to apprehend Every; thus emphasizing the impact his crime had. This is due to, as Burgess elaborates, the response of the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, who sent his army to five essential trading posts and closed them off to English trade. Until Every was captured and executed for his crimes, this would remain so.[76] Hereby creating a great urgency for the English government to open this manhunt for Every.

The argument can thus be made that there was a certain influence by Every's 'pirate legend' as firstly described in the *Copy of Verses*, since it becomes clear throughout the source that the government made usage of its narrative and turns 'Every's ill will' towards England into an additional motive for encouraging his apprehension towards the general public. The proclamation enhances the unforgiving tone of the ballad in order to underline the seriousness of Every's crimes; like Houblon has done before.

Lastly, the document of *the Tryals of Joseph Dawson, Edward Forseith, William May, William Bishop, James Lewis and John Sparkes. For several Piracies and Robberies by them committed in the Company of Every the Grand Pirate, near the Coast of the East-Indies; and several other Places on the Sea. Given an ACCOUNT of their Villainous Robberies and Barbarities. At the Admiralty Sessions, begun at the Old-Baily on the 29th of October, 1696. and*

[75] Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 12. Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 24. Early English Books Online Collections, "Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every," line 25.
[76] Douglas Burgess, *The Pirates' Pact: The Secret Alliances Between History's Most Notorious Buccaneers and Colonial America*, (McGraw-Hill: 2009), 143.

ended on the 6th of November was printed in London for John Everingham, who was a bookseller at the Star in Ludgate-Street, in 1696.

The argument that can be made is that the document, even more than previously discussed sources, could be seen as representative of the conception of the English government towards Every and piracy in general at the time. Throughout the source it will be discussed at length as to how the document portrayed the initiatives being taken to influence both the historical narrative and public opinion with regards to Every in particular and pirates and piracy in more general terms by the English government. The aspect that will become most apparent is that not only was the English government influenced by the 'pirate legend' of Henry Every, but actively made use of it to influence public opinion for their own political gain.

The Trial document opens with a general preamble, stating the date, the 29th of October 1696 and the place, the Justice Hall in Old Bailey, at which the trial is held. The name of the Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, Charles Hedges, is stated and is followed by a list of the commissioners, the exchequer, the justices, secretaries of the Admiralty, etc.. A speech is held by Dr. Newton, who recounts the crimes of the prisoners to the court, putting emphasis on both the act of piracy against the Great Mogul and the mutiny on the Charles. The Judge of Admiralties approaches the Grand Jury. He once again stresses the importance of the trial and the conviction of the prisoners, detailing why the actions of the prisoners and piracy in general ought to be deemed a crime. He gives his own interpretation of the act of piracy, which he simply describes as a sea term for robbery. Hedges adds that piracy 'committed within the Jurisdiction of the Admiralty; if any man be assaulted within that jurisdiction, and his Ship or Goods violently taken away without a Legal Authority, this is Robbery and Piracy'.[77] The judge then continued by stating that the jury is 'not obliged in all cases to require a clear and full Evidence', but to examine the case until their consciences are satisfied. After Hedges' remarks, the prisoners are brought into the courtroom, the indictment is read and the prisoners are sworn in. Each of them was asked whether they plead guilty or not guilty. All of them plead not guilty. Then the witnesses are brought forward and questioned one by one. The most prominent of these witnesses are John Dan and Philip Midleton, considering they both give a rather extensive account of Every's journey in general. The document closes with the sentencing of the prisoners, who were to be hanged at Executioner's Dock on the 25th of November.

[77] Early English Books Online, "The Tryals of Joseph Dawson," 6.

An aspect of the document that stood out was the definition initially given by the judge (piracy as a sea term for robbery) seems, as Rennie puts it, simple enough.[78] However, his explanation that follows considering the act of committing piracy within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty, is far from simple.[79] It can arguably be interpreted that this definition has been designed to fit both the crime of committing a mutiny and the crime of capturing the Ganj-i-sawai, which can be deemed as rather convenient for the court in the conviction of the six individuals. Apart from that it might also be considered interesting that, following his statement with regards to his definition of piracy, the judge stressed that the jury only has to look at the evidence presented until their conscience is satisfied.

It becomes obvious throughout the document that John Dan and Philip Midleton are the two main witnesses, considering the accounts they give of the events, having also sailed with Every and his crew. Yet the first witness, J. Gravett, for example, paints Every in a rather positive light. He states that, during the mutiny, Every comes over to talk to both him and the captain of the Charles, who had fallen ill at the time, to offer them the choice to either come with him or stay behind. Once refusing to join Every's crew, Gravett was taken to shore. Additionally he was even given a few extra clothes by Every, as he did not have much. Despite his initial capture by the carpenter of the Charles, who held him at knife point, it could be argued that Gravett was not treated violently by Every himself. Thus, portraying Every as a rather reasonable man, especially in comparison to the descriptions given by the court. Once again, it becomes apparent that a certain distinction can be made between the narrative the English government attempts to convey with regard to Every and the account given by the witnesses.

This specific phenomenon aligns with the main argument that can be made according to this source, since it displays a certain debate between the public and English government with regards to the perception of Henry Every and pirates and piracy in general. As written by Burgess, it could be taken as far as to state that, through the means of this trial, the English government attempted to manipulate public opinion.[80] There are several aspects that should be considered when looking at this argumentation.

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[78] Rennie, *Treasure Neverland*, 11.
[79] Early English Books Online, "The Tryals of Joseph Dawson," 6.
[80] Douglas R. Burgess Jr., "Piracy in the Public Sphere: The Henry Every Trails and the Battle for Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Print Culture," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no 4 (2009): 888, https://doi.org/10.1086/603599.

Firstly, as Burgess brings forth, it should be taken into account that this is the second trial during which the Admiralty tries to convict these individuals for piracy, as they had been acquitted by the jury the first time. This also becomes apparent in the document on page 17 where one of the prisoners states, with regards to the mutiny of the Charles during the witness account of John Dan, that they had already been tried for that.[81] This only makes it apparent that the Admiralty was rather set on the conviction of these individuals.

Despite the general advantages of the crown, there were still plenty of obstacles with the conviction of the six individuals. In order to appease the Great Mugal, the individuals had to be convicted for piracy considering the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai. However, this was a matter that was not close to the hearts of English civilians, since its victims were foreigners. Attempting to influence public opinion there was a fusion of courts, the Admiralty and a jury of the common law, whose conceptions of piracy had been in conflict for centuries.[82] Thus, the main emphasis was placed on the mutiny.[83] Yet this would not suffice in convincing the Great Mugal, who was keen on seeing justice being done for the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai. Because of these complications it became essential to depict Every as a villain and change his narrative from 'noble pirate' to 'violent rogue'.

Burgess notes that the trial of Joseph Dawson in 1696 was not the first time the government forced a verdict for their own political gain. It was, however, significant that the government took such lengths in the effort to manipulate and alter public opinion with regards to pirates.[84] By means of both the publication and the content of the trial document itself, it becomes clear that the main goal of this trail was to deliberately create a historical memory, altering the narrative regarding Every and his actions, who had thus far been placed alongside the 'noble pirates' such as Francis Drake and Henry Morgan.[85]

All in all, The argument can be made that the document of the trail of Joseph Dawson shows not only the narrative of Every's journey, but also the complexity of the politics that surrounded the actions committed by Every and his crew. With regards to how the legend of Every influenced the English government in their political decision making considering pirates and piracy, it can be stated, that the crown used both existing narratives and created narratives

[81] Early English Books Online, "The Tryals of Joseph Dawson," 17.
[82] Burgess, "Piracy in the Public Sphere," 897.
[83] Burgess, "Piracy in the Public Sphere," 901.
[84] Burgess, "Piracy in the Public Sphere," 889.
[85] Burgess, "Piracy in the Public Sphere," 893 and 894.

themselves throughout the trial in order to fabricate a historical memory for their own political gain.

The 'pirate legend' as platform for ideological thought

Having previously focused on sources which were published during the period in which Every was still active, we will now take a look at three sources published after 1696. Perhaps one of the striking aspects, at first glance, is the alternative spelling of the name of the infamous pirate, which has now changed from Every to Avery in the approximate ten years that separate them.

Nevertheless, when looking more attentively at these sources an overarching trend can be distinguished throughout these texts. Despite a certain neglect for specific details, as has been seen in previously discussed sources, there is a particular tendency by the authors of these sources to use Every's 'pirate legend' as a setting for current political thought. Thus, making the historical Every even less of a centerpoint and focusing rather on what he represented on a more general scale.

The first source that will be focused on is *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery, the Famous English Pirate, (rais'd from a Cabbin Boy, to a King) now in Possession of Madagascar*, published in 1709. While Woodard notes that the author of the work is unknown, Frohock claims the work to be an extract from the journal of Adrian Van Broeck, a sailor who agreed to join Every and his crew in order to secure his own survival.[86] A theme that regularly occurs throughout the work is the exploitation of sailors in general.[87] The author of *The Life and Adventures* makes a point of the circumstances in which Every had found himself and which had subsequently driven him to crime; emphasizing Every's good qualities and thus, despite his illegal operations, portraying Every as an honest and justified character.[88]

However the main focus of the work is on the establishment of Every's pirate republic at Madagascar. Frohock argues that the Every legend is often used by the public to reflect philosophical and political thought or criticism. Every's pirate republic as described in *The Life and Adventures* lends itself rather perfectly for similar thought experiments with regards to the

[86] Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates*, 26.
Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 4.
[87] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 5.
[88] Ibid.

relation between the early modern state and the public. The author of the source introduces the idea of the pirate republic as having a well-governed political system, instead of the previously conceptualized 'rogue utopia'. Yet, the author of the source notes that this 'well-governed republic' did not last long and eventually yielded under the human desire for power.[89] Here Frohock draws a parallel to the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, showcasing within the source Hobbes' philosophy that peace among humans can only be maintained under a sovereign.[90] Consequently, at the end of *The Life and Adventures* Every and his crew attempt to reïntergrate back into mainstream society. All in all, deeming the pirate republic as a failed alternative to the current governmental structures.[91]

Secondly, the play *The Successful Pyrate* by Charles Johnson (not to be confused with Captain Charles Johnson) was published in 1713. Similarly *The Life and Adventures*, it focuses mainly on the pirate republic Every established on Madagascar. Every, now personified as the fictional character Arviragus, rules over this newly founded republic. By showcasing the tension between the desires of the pirates in terms of social status and greed and the social organization they now find themselves in, the play serves as a parallel (and satire) to the current political climate in England.[92] The play deliberately makes a point of presenting the viewer (or reader) with opposing viewpoints in political rhetoric, voiced and embodied by different characters, as the story unfolds. Hereby the question of which will triumph over the other, the justified sovereignty of Arviragus or the desires of the individuals of his rogue nation.[93]

As Frohock emphasizes, a recurring theme in the play is that both the pirates under Arviragus and the common class will always try to secure individual interests over public welfare.[94] This shows that Charles Johnson uses the rhetoric that alternative social structures with more liberty and equality is undermined by the individuality of both the pirates and the common class. Thus emphasizing that these ideologies are perhaps not a good alternative for the current political structure. An argument that aligns with the insights of *The Life and Adventures*, in a

[89] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 5.
[90] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 6.
[91] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 6 and 7.
[92] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 7.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 8.

perhaps more satirical and dramatized manner. The play ends with Arviragus seeing his own shortcomings and attempts to repent for his abuse of power for individual gain.[95]

All in all, the play lends itself rather well to the overarching argument that Every's 'pirate legend' and the narration considering his settlement in Madagascar was commonly used by authors of the time to present philosophical ideas with regards to political thought and social structure at the beginning of the 18th century in England.

Lastly, the *Chapter of Avery and His Crew* in *The General History of the Pyrates*, published in 1724, is one of the later primary sources produced. Therefore the assumption could easily be made that this could be regarded as a sum of the earlier primary sources in terms of quantitative and earlier used information, reflecting the earlier social debate considering the diverse viewpoints of both the public and the government at least in some regard. However, when diving into the chapter it soon becomes clear that this is not exactly the case. The chapter starts off with an interlude, telling the legend of Every, his mutiny, the establishing of his settlement on Madagascar, the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, his escape to the Caribbean and several speculations of where he might have gone since then. From there the story diverges, shifting its focus on the remaining crew.

Contrary to previously published sources, the author of *The General History of the Pyrates* places an increasing emphasis on the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, recognizing its political and economical significance on a global and geopolitical scale.[96] A point that, despite the seriousness with which the English government took this crime, had until then been mostly glanced over with the context of the Every legend.

Now being separated by twenty years, it can be argued that this part of the legend, due to the more radical 'anti-government' undertone, might be considered as an aspect that aligned more with the political ideology of its readers with regard to their perception of pirates. Thus, reflecting the political perception of the general public and their views towards the English government as could be distinguished throughout the two previously discussed sources.

[95] Frohock, "The Early Literary Evolution of the Notorious Pirate Henry Avery," 9.
[96] Defoe, *The General History of the Pyrates*, 49.

Conclusion

When looking at the chronological publication of these primary sources, a certain trend can indeed be distinguished. The sources published at the time when Every was still active show a certain kind of debate considering pirates and piracy, perhaps even the lower class of English society in general, between the government and the public. Due to previous figures such as Sir Francis Drake and Henry Morgan, who had been deemed heroes by the English government at the time, the public had a relatively positive view on pirates and privateers. With the case of Every, who after the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, became a great nuisance to the English government, the public had to be convinced that Every was not one of these sea heroes. This, however, as becomes apparent through the trial documents, backfired; making Every a 'Robin Hood' of the seas. The primary sources published in the period after Every was active, mostly share a common theme in which they represent current philosophical and political thought, which is showcased through the establishment of Every's pirate republic at Madagascar, using this setting as a platform of reflection.

It could be argued that the legend of Henry Every influenced English political decision making with regards to the prosecution of piracy in the 18th century, since *A Copy of Verses* was the first kind of information that reached London after Every's mutiny. It was also by Houblon to strengthen his case and vilify Every's actions. When looking specifically at both *A Copy of Verses* and *The Proclamation for Apprehending Henry Every* it becomes apparent that the legend or myth described in the former was used in the latter. Especially when compared to *Henry Every's Open Letter* which differs greatly in tone in which it addresses the reader, seeming to present a more nuanced voice. An argument can thus be made that, not only was the English government influenced by the legend and mythization of Every, they equally made use of it to emphasize the seriousness of the threat Every posed to society in order to gain public appeal.

All in all, looking at the analysis of these sources, it might not be the question to what extent the English government was influenced by the legend of Henry Every, but how they made active use of this legend to influence political and public opinion with regards to pirates and piracy.

Chapter 3: the Case of Edward Teach

In the previous chapter we have seen that the English government was not only influenced by the 'pirate legend' of Henry Every, but in fact made use of it with regard to the prosecution of pirates and controlling public opinion. It will be argued, according to the case of Edward Teach, alias Blackbeard, that the same phenomenon can be deduced from the primary sources concerning Teach.

Additionally, it can be argued that a progressive trend can be seen in the tactics used by the English government to use the 'pirate legend' to their political advantage and influence public opinion in order to achieve their political goals with regards to the prosecution of piracy.

A note ought to be made that, when looking at the specific case of Edward Teach, who was mainly active in the Caribbean Sea, the prosecution of pirates was implemented by the colonial delegates of the English government in the Americas and the West Indies. Despite being representatives of the English government in the colonies, these governors functioned in a different kind of political environment and thus had different interests at heart. As shall become apparent throughout the analysed sources, the colonial delegates were often more concerned with personal political gain than the political conservation of England and its international relations, as was seen throughout the case of Henry Every.

Blackbeard as persona

First of all, to get a better understanding of the 'pirate legend' of Edward Teach, there will be a focus and discussion on what this 'legend' or mythicization entailed. We will start the analysis of primary sources with *Captain Teach alias Black-beard* in *The General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson, published in 1724. As previously noted, *The General History of the Pyrates* is a much-debated source within the discourse considering the merging of fact and fiction and the indeterminacy of the author's identity. A more in-depth discussion on the usage of the source and how the source can be interpreted will be addressed later. Despite the limitations of this source with regards to historical accuracy, it can still be deemed insightful within the context of this research. The fact that it has been the outline for historical research considering Edward Teach, can tell us something about its significance. It paints a vivid picture of both how Edward Teach profiled himself and how he was perceived by the public at the time of the publication of *The General History of the Pyrates*.

The chapter considering Edward Teach in *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson opens with the concise statement that Teach was a Bristol born man, who sailed from Jamaica. Despite serving as a sailor during the war, and being described by the author as a character of 'uncommon Boldness and personal Courage', Teach never held any position of significance until he became a pirate. The source notes that Teach's career as a pirate began in approximately 1716, after he was given a captured sloop by Captain Benjamin Hornigold, under whom he had served as Quartermaster.[97] After continuing to sail with Hornigold for a short while, the two parted ways and Teach eventually met Major Bonnet, a 'Gentleman of good Reputation and Estate in the Island of Barbados', with whom he joined forces. It soon became apparent that Bonnet was not used to and in fact knew very little of both maritime life and mastering a ship. To relieve him from these 'Fatigues and Care' Teach let Bonnet reside aboard his own ship and put a one Richards in command of Bonnet's ship. [98] The following keypoint in Teach's biography is the Blockade of Charlestown, South Carolina (current U.S.A.). The source describes how Teach occupied the harbor of the town for approximately five or six days, demanding a chest of medicine. If refused, 'they would murder all their Prisoners, send up their Heads to the Governor, and set the Ships they had taken on Fire'. An agreement was quickly made.[99] After having received the medicine, Teach released the ships and hostages and subsequently sailed to North Carolina where he and his men accepted a pardon.[100] Simultaneously, he came to an 'understanding' with the governor, Charles Eden. Teach, however, continued his piratical operations. The remainder of the chapter, which is rather extensive, gives a detailed description of Teach's death at the hands of Captain Robert Maynard.

While Henry Every's chapter in *A General History of the Pyrates* seems to tell us a cohesive story and arguably a compelling legend, Edward Teach's chapter appears mainly to be concerned with the stating of facts, or at least, what can be deemed as fact by the author. Most notable in Edward Teach's chapter in *A General History of the Pyrates* how he meets his end, which is described in detail and concerns a rather large part of the chapter. Subsequently, this might be due to the abundant and sensationally detailed information about Teach's capture and death, which was covered in several newspaper reports in English newspapers. Equally it could

[97] Defoe, "Chapter III of Captain Teach alias Blackbeard," 71.
[98] Defoe, "Chapter III of Captain Teach alias Blackbeard," 72.
[99] Defoe, "Chapter III of Captain Teach alias Blackbeard," 74 and 75.
[100] Defoe, "Chapter III of Captain Teach alias Blackbeard," 76.

give us an indication as to which aspects the general public had an interest with regards to the overall topic of pirates.

However, arguably an aspect of lesser importance that can be distinguished throughout this source, is that of the usage of the name Teach and his alias Blackbeard. While the author starts his chapter mainly using the name Teach, there is a gradual shift towards an increased usage of his alias Blackbead in the text. This could arguably indicate the slow increase of Blackbeard's notoriety among the general public.

It thus becomes apparent that a prominent distinction between the legend of Every and the mythicization of Edward Teach is that Teach relied more on a created image, a persona, while Every's legend is more narrative driven. In spite of certain key events in the period during which Teach was active, there is a lack of a cohesive narrative through which a particular 'legend' can be distinguished. An element that seems rather iconic for Edward Teach, however, is his appearance and the manner in which he profiled himself. In order to understand how Teach's legend might have influenced political decision-making by the English (colonial) government, it is important to establish the function and reason behind the creation of his persona as Blackbeard.

The distinct image created by Teach was said to have struck fear into anyone who laid an eye on him. B. Little, debunking many pirate myths in his work, argues that this might have been the case, yet so would any thug who would put a pistol to someone's head.[101] Continuing to place the creation of Blackbeard in nuance, Little states that Teach's 'fierce' visage, let alone the amount of pistols he would have worn on his person, would have hardly been recognizable among a large pirate crew, until one was within approximately 200 to 250 yards.[102] Even if merchants would have recognized Teach's flag, had he flown his own colors, merchants would have already been in range and ready to surrender.[103]

The question subsequently asked is: why such a distinct image? Within the discourse considering Teach's image as Blackbeard there are two main reasons given for the creation of such a persona. First of all, the most common reason for the creation of the persona of Blackbeard, as already pointed out by Little, was to scare merchants into submission and hand over their cargo. It is ironic, notes Huebner, that the creation of the persona of Blackbeard was

[101] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 45.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 46.

ultimately done to save lives, not only of Teach's crew, but also that of the merchants they preyed on.[104] The eventual aim of piracy was to capture a vessel with as little as possible or even any violence at all, since pirates often did not have a military advantage on the ships they would attack. Therefore, intimidation and the threat of combat and violence became a tool which was commonly used by pirates.

Secondly, and arguably a more complex reason for the creation of Blackbeard as persona, is to strike fear into the members of his own crew; consequently using his image as a means of discipline. Pirate crews were democratic and could elect a different captain at any given moment, with the exception of battle. Huebner states that if there was no support by the majority of his crew, Teach wouldn't have been able to continue and been replaced by a newly elected captain. This meant that there would have been a considerable amount of constant pressure to meet the desires of his crew in order not to get replaced and would also indicate the limitations of Teach's own agency, since most of the decisions made would have been in the interest of his crew.[105] Therefore, the creation of the image of Blackbeard as a fierce and violent pirate might have been an attempt for Teach to regain some of his agency as captain.

Nonetheless, as argued by Little, brutality and violence would typically lead to mutiny against a captain.[106] Loyalty of a pirate crew was often won by a combination of both fear and good leadership. Yet, in Teach's case, there is not enough evidence to determine what kind of leadership he practiced.[107] Ultimately, it seems unlikely that Teach would have used excessive amounts of fear or violence against his crew, as is described in, for example, *A General History of the Pyrates*. This simply would not have been beneficial for Teach's position as captain and therefore is, as Huebner puts it, likely an embellishment of authors.[108]

Returning to the aspect of how he created his persona, it is clear that Teach relied on the spreading of words by his crew.[109] This would doubtlessly have enhanced his 'legend', as is regularly the case with the spreading of stories. Pirate crews often consisted of people with a great variety in religious beliefs. Huebner explains that the large variety of cultural practices of sailors in the Caribbean during the Golden age of piracy formed a 'breeding ground' for the

[104] Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard," 6.
[105] Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard," 13 and 14.
[106] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 46 and 47.
[107] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 46.
[108] Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard," 5.
[109] Little, *The Golden Age of Piracy*, 45.

sensationalizing of legends and imagery of certain individuals.[110] It would have meant that sailors would generally have viewed Teach's imagery as either intimidating, fearing him themselves, or would find it convincing that it would indeed strike fear into the hearts of the merchants they attacked.[111]

Thus, the main reason behind the creation of Blackbeard as a persona is to intimidate the merchants Teach and his crew preyed upon. Through a legacy of terror and violence, Teach was able to avoid actual combat and consequently spare the lives of both his own crew and that of the vessels he attacked. Despite being a possible contributing factor, as discussed, it is less likely that the image of Blackbeard was created to install a certain kind of discipline amongst the pirate crew, since this could have possibly led to a mutiny.

Returning to the primary source of Teach's chapter in *A General History of the Pyrates*. As discussed extensively in the context of Henry Every, *A General History of the Pyrates* was one of the sources through which a certain political and governmental ideology was displayed. Making use of the 'pirate legend' as a platform to convey a philosophical discourse that reflected certain concepts of political thought of the public at the time of its publication. Yet, Teach's case seems to be less suitable for this interpretation. Despite its popularity as a primary source among historians researching piracy in the early modern period, *A General History of the Pyrats* has mainly been used to focus on the biographies of specific pirates individually. Frohock notes that it has seldom been examined as a work in its own right.[112] While describing the pirates' histories in a rather satirical manner and with little nuance in portraying radicalism and ambition, it also gives an insight to the consequences created by the pressure put on human values by social norms.[113]

It can be argued that Teach's case, within the context of *A General History of the Pirates*, ought to be viewed rather as a study of human nature in exceptional conditions, than as a platform for displaying political ideologies. This would also align more with the overall conception of pirates at the time of both the period during which Teach was active and the publication of *A General History of the Pyrates*, which were only five years removed from one another; in contrast with that of Every, which had a time gap of approximately 30 years.

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[110] Huebner, "The Man behind the Beard," 10.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Richard Frohock, "Satire and Civil Governance in A General History of the Pyrates (1724-1726)" *The Eighteenth Century* 56, no 4 (2015): 468, https://doi.org/10.1353/ecy.2015.0033.
[113] Frohock, "Satire and Civil Governance," 478.

Governmental use of Blackbeard's legend in political decision-making

As has been previously argued in the case of Henry Every, the English government was not merely influenced by Every's 'pirate legend', but also made use of it. For the following aspect, considering the case of Edward Teach, we will continue to distinguish how the colonial delegates of the English government made use of Teach's 'pirate legend' for their own political gain with regards to the prosecution of pirates. This will be done according to two primary sources, namely the *Proclamation from Governor Spotswood* and the *Letter from Captain Maynard*.

A Proclamation Publishing the Rewards given for apprehending, or killing Pyrates had been issued by the governor of Virginia (current U.S.A.), Alexander Spotswood, in 1718. It was published both in the February edition of the Boston News Letter of 1719 and in *A General History of the Pyrates*.

As noted at the beginning of the source, it was drawn up according to the session of the assembly held in Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia at the time, on the 11th of November 1718. The act was meant to encourage 'the apprehending and destroying of Pyrates'.[114] From the 14th of November 1718 to the 14th of November 1719 one could receive rewards for either the killing or capturing of a pirate. Specific degrees and latitudes are given. These pirates ought to be captured or killed in between degrees of thirty four and thirty nine, of Northern Latitude and within one hundred leagues of the continent of Virginia or the provinces of Virginia.[115] The rewards for killing or capturing a pirate are stated as follows. Edward Teach and his alias are specifically mentioned; his capture or killing will be rewarded with hundred pounds.[116] For every commander of a pirate vessel one could be rewarded with forty pounds. A lieutenant, master, quarter-master, boatswain or carpenter was worth twenty pounds. Inferior officers of pirate vessels were worth fifteen pounds and every individual man taken on board of a pirate vessel was worth ten pounds.[117] The source then reassures the reader that this encouragement for the apprehension and destruction of pirates is a completely honorable undertaking, for it will be in the service of his Majesty and in the name of the protection of the colony and, by extension, their

[114] Defoe, "A Proclamation, Published the Rewards given for apprehending, Or Killing Pyrates by A. Spotswood," 78.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Defoe, "A Proclamation, Published the Rewards given for apprehending, Or Killing Pyrates by A. Spotswood," 78 and 79.
[117] Defoe, "A Proclamation, Published the Rewards given for apprehending, Or Killing Pyrates by A. Spotswood," 79.

country. Additionally, the suppression of pirates is further encouraged, since they 'may be truly called Enemies to Mankind'.[118] It is noted that this proclamation shall be published and distributed among the sheriffs at their country houses and in several churches and chappels. The source closes with a common 'God Save The King' and is then signed by Alexander Spotswood.[119]

Spotswood's usage of Teach's 'pirate legend' can be seen in the source through the specific mentioning of his alias. By referring to Teach as this 'notorious pirate' *Blackbeard*, towards the general public, Spotswood emphasizes Teach's mythicization and thus making use of his 'pirate legend' for Spotswood's political aims.

A common misconception on which colonial delegates such as Spotswood relied with regards to the prosecution of piracy, is that pirates lay at the root of the disruption of trade in the Americas and the West Indies. While this seems like logical reasoning, especially from an English perspective, the opposite was usually the case. Pirates were often beneficial to colonial trade, since they captured (among others) English ships and sold their goods in the colonies, often for lower prices than intended. Since a large part of the English economy relied on the trade in the Caribbean, this consequently became a nuisance for the English trade in the West Indies, but not for the West Indies themselves. This complies to Spotswoods statement considering the legitimization of his proclamation and encouragement towards the public to capture and kill pirates. It also brings forth the complexity of the political environment of the colonial government in the Americas and West Indies, since Spotswoods approach was arguably more of an exception than a rule.

As mentioned before, Teach and his crew met with the governor of North Carolina, Charles Eden, to sign a pardon.[120] Due to the agreement that was reached between the pirate captain and the governor, Teach continued with his piratical endeavours of which governor Eden would now also financially profit. Since their commerce partially fell victim to Teach's actions, the residents of North Carolina were less pleased with this agreement. Thus, being aware that their governor would not assist them with this 'pirate problem', they "sent a Deputation to

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[118] Defoe, "A Proclamation, Published the Rewards given for apprehending, Or Killing Pyrates by A. Spotswood," 79.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Lucio A. Bianchi, "Killing Blackbeard: Planning the Expedition that Killed America's Most Notorious Pirate,", *L.A.B. Independent Publishing* (2022): 4, https://www.academia.edu/96888297/Killing_Blackbeard_Planning_the_Expedition_that_Killed_Americas_Most_Notorious_Pirate.

Virginia", requesting the aid of governor Spotswood.[121] It so happened that the governor of Virginia was more than happy to help. One of Spotswood's political opponents, Philip Ludwell, critiqued that Spotswood's endeavour of apprehending Edward Teach is better left in silence. He writes that due to the goods aboard Teach's ship it would have been financially beneficial for Spotswood to apprehend Teach.[122] Furthermore, as noted by Moore, there is no evidence for actual support from the English government for the undertaking and would have been disastrous for Spotswood had he not managed to capture Teach.[123] This evidently opposes directly what was written in the *Proclamation from Spotswood*, in which he assures his readers the operation would be in the honorable service of the King.

An additional interesting note is that, through Moore's extensive compiling and analysing, spanning three decades of researching over four hundred primary sources with regards to Teach's activities, there has been no evidence found that Teach ever killed anyone until his final battle with captain Maynard.[124] Hereby demonstrating the extent and willingness of both the public and the colonial government to put more value in Blackbeard's legend than actual facts.

The argument can subsequently be made, according to the source itself and the historical context in which it was produced, that Spotswood had his own personal political and financial motives for apprehending Edward Teach. Despite claiming that the apprehending of the pirate was a noble cause and in service of the English King, as Spotswood states in the proclamation, it becomes apparent through historical context that Spotswood personally gained many benefits from capturing Teach. For example the gain in political popularity among the public and the financial profit that could be made by capturing Teach's pirate vessel. The enhancement of Teach's legend and image as Blackbeard therefore became key instruments to stress the importance of the 'pirate problem' in the colonies. When emphasizing the danger Teach and his crew formed to the colonial society, Spotswood would gain support by the public for apprehending him.

[121] Bianchi, "Killing Blackbeard," 4.
[122] David D. Moore, "Captain Edward Thatch: A Brief Analysis of the Primary Source Documents Concerning the Notorious Blackbeard," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 95, no 2 (2018): 182, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45184934.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Moore, 'Captain Edward Thatch', 184

However, Spotswood was not the only person to make use of Teach's 'pirate legend' and image as Blackbeard. This can equally be argued for the individual leading the expedition, Captain Robert Maynard, who eventually went down in history as the man who captured and killed Edward Teach. According to the next source, *The Letter from Captain Maynard*, which was published in The British Gazetteer in 1719, we will substantiate the argument that (the colonial) English government and delegates were not only influenced by the 'pirate legend', but equally made use of it with regards to the prosecution of pirates further.[125] The source details the capture and defeat of Edward Teach, which resulted in Teach's death at the hand of Captain Maynard. As shall later be discussed, the letter was preceded by a short report on the death of Edward Teach in the same newspaper that had been published two weeks earlier. Captain Maynard's letter was, as Cooke explains, one of three news reports published in English newspapers with regards to Teach's capture and death. The first two appeared in rivaling newspapers, the Saturday's Post and the British Gazetteer, on the same day; April 11, 1719. While they overlap in the general course of events, they vary quite a bit in details.[126] Two weeks after the initial newspaper reports, Maynard's letter was published in the British Gazetteer, as if in compromise for the previously rather short piece on the topic.[127]

From the short preamble at the head of the text, which was probably published in the British Gazetteer, can be deduced that the letter was sent from Virginia to Mr. Symonds, who was lieutenant of the Phoenix and stationed in New York. The source opens rather briskly with 'Sir', which is then directly followed by the report.[128] Maynard had departed on the 17th of December with two sloops, one under his command and one under the command of one Mr. Hyde, fifty-four men and no guns, only small arms. The lack of guns, as is made apparent at the closing of the letter, was something Maynard expresses some concern about.[129] As he states, it might have saved the lives of his men if they did have guns aboard. There were twenty-two men aboard Mr. Hyde's sloop and thirty-two aboard Captain Maynard's.[130] On the 22nd they encountered Edward Teach, upon whom Maynard opened fire. In the letter Maynard gives some description of Teach, remarking on his notoriety as a pirate for having taken 'a great many

[125] Brooks, "Letter of Captain Maynard," 545 and 546.
[126] Arthur L. Cooke, "British Newspaper Accounts of Blackbeard's Death," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 61, no 3 (1953): 304, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4245947.
[127] Cooke, "British Newspaper Accounts of Blackbeard's Death," 306.
[128] Brooks, "Letter of Captain Maynard," 545 and 546.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

English Vessels on these Coasts and in the West Indies'. He also notes the reason for Teach's alias, namely that he is called Blackbeard because 'he lets his Beard grow, and tied it up in black Ribbon'.[131] The pirate captain had a crew of twenty-one men and nine guns aboard his ship. Teach drank to Maynard's damnation and told him he would neither take nor give quarter. Mr. Hyde was killed by Teach's gun shot and five men of his crew were wounded. Maynard continued to fire at Teach with the small arms and was eventually able to board him. Teach entered Maynard's ship with ten men, but the twelve Maynard had left aboard his ship there 'fought like Heroes'. Ultimately, Teach was shot five times and had twenty 'dismall Cuts in several Parts of his Body'. Maynard took nine prisoners and cut off Blackbeard's head, putting it on the bowsprit to carry it back to Virginia.[132]

An interesting note made by Cooke in his conclusion considers Maynard's closing line, 'for we had no Guns on Board; so that the Engagement on our Side was more Bloody and Desperate', is that Maynard expresses a certain grievance towards his superiors for having not equipped the sloops with guns, which could have saved the lives of some of Maynard's men.[133] However, Bianchi mentions that this was a deliberate choice made by Spotswood, since it would give Maynard an advantage with regards to speed.[134] Bianchi adds that, prior to the undertaking to capture Teach, his quartermaster, William Howard had been seen in a tavern of one of Virginia's seaport towns. He was immediately arrested by Spotswood. Having provided Spotswood with Teach's location after his arrest, it is not unlikely to think that Howard might have also given an indication on the number of men aboard Teach's ship. This consequently gives the impression that Spotswood made a well-considered calculation, instead of a mistake by merely equipping Maynard's sloop with firearms.

Arguably, most notable throughout the source is the overall tone in language. While being a report, sent from one captain to another, especially the latter part of the text arguably reads rather as a thrilling narrative. There is both an abundant use of Teach's alias and a small part in which Maynard explains both his reputation and the reason for the name 'Blackbeard'. Apart from that there is a vivid description of Teach's death and decapitation. When placing Maynard's letter in context with the *Proclamation from Spotswood*, the reason behind the abundant use of

[131] Brooks, "Letter of Captain Maynard," 545 and 546.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Cooke, "British Newspaper Accounts of Blackbeard's Death," 307.
[134] Bianchi, "Killing Blackbeard," 7.

Teach's alias in the report, the vivid description of Teach's demise and the emphasis on the number aboard Teach's ship becomes more apparent; considering the reward Spotswood would bestow on the one who would deliver Edward Teach. Since Teach would be worth a hundred pounds and there would likewise be a reward for the higher officers, inferior officers, the individual pirates and not to forget further cargo aboard the pirate vessel, this would have amounted to a rather large sum. The act of separating Teach's head from his body and displaying it promptly at the bowsprit of his ship, could equally be read as the act of a hunter showing off his trophy in order to claim a reward.

The argument that can therefore be made is that the enhancement of Teach's 'pirate legend' – the abundant usages of his alias, the mention of his reputation as a violent and notorious pirate, the description of his fearsome features, possibly even the vivid description of how he met his end – would have served Maynard's private interests with regard to financial gain due to the rewards issued by Spotswood. Additionally, the emphasis on Teach's notoriety would have aided in the legitimization for Maynard's own actions, framing himself as a 'hero' compared to this villainous pirate.

Progression in usage of narrative by the government

According to the next primary source, which will be analysed, A Proclamation *by the King for Suppressing of Pirates* published in 1717 in The London Gazette, an argument will be made that a certain trend of progression in the usage of narrative, specifically the use of the 'pirate legend' by the English government considering the political decision-making with regard to the prosecution of piracy, can be seen. The source can be considered particularly interesting, since it contains the announcement of the 'Act of Grace', a policy according to which the government would issue a pardon to pirates who were willing to come forward and cease their illegal activities, thus discharging their previous crimes. This indicates an arguably significant change in political decision-making with regards to pirates and piracy. Especially when comparing it to the political decision-making at the time of Henry Every.

After the preamble of the proclamation itself, the source starts off by directly stating the matter with which it is concerned. Namely, that the crown has been informed about several individuals who have since the 4th of June in 1715 started committing acts of 'Piracies and

Robberies upon the high Seas' in Caribbean (or 'West Indian') waters, which has disturbed much of the English trading.[135] It is stated that, despite the 'appointed [...] Force as we [the English crown] judge sufficient for suppressing the said Pirates' shall be granted a pardon. Continuously, the source conveys the conditions of this pardon. Within the period of the 5th of September 1718, and the 5th of January 1719, in order to attain said pardon, pirates will have to surrender themselves to 'one of the Principal Secretaries of State in Great Britain or Ireland, or to any governor or Deputy governor' in the English colonies.[136] If pirates do not or neglect to surrender themselves to the authorities, however, the source mentions that they will command all and any forces to capture and prosecute these pirates. Any individual who discovers or manages to seize a pirate will be granted a reward. One hundred pounds will be given to a person who delivers a pirate captain or a pirate vessel. For every 'Lieutenant, Master, Boatswain, Carpenter and gunner' one will receive forty pounds, thirty pounds for any inferior officer and for each individual pirate that is brought to the authorities the capturer will be rewarded with twenty pounds.[137] The source ends with the date at which the proclamation is issued, the 5th of September 1717, and the traditional 'God save the King'.[138]

One of the first notable aspects within the text, is that, despite having sent 'sufficient' military forces to suppress piracy in the West Indies, the English government will now also issue a pardon to every pirate who would be willing to take one. In other words, apart from the direct prosecution of piracy, the government will also adopt another kind of tactic to tackle the problem. This could arguably be read as an attempt by the crown to assure the public, and perhaps more importantly, English merchants that they are taking the problem of piracy seriously. However, in contrast to the *Proclamation for apprehending Henry Every*, the tactics now used by the government could be considered less direct when it comes to attempting to influence the public's opinion with regards to pirates and piracy.

This brings us to the second noteworthy remark within the context of this source. A certain kind of paradox can be deduced from the source. While the crown offers the pirates, in the period between the 5th of September of 1718 and the 5th of January of 1719, a pardon that will discharge their previous crimes, the actual prosecution of pirates continues. Additionally,

[135] The Gazette, "By the King A Proclamation for Suppressing of Pirates."
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

rewards are awarded to whomever delivers a pirate to the English authorities, whether this is in England, Ireland or in the English colonies. Thus making it more appealing for individuals to both ‘go on the hunt’ for and extradite these pirates.

With a hindsight on the manner of prosecution of pirates, approximately twenty years earlier, during the time of Henry Every, there are several aspects within this source that can be considered of particular interest. A certain aspect that can be deduced from the source with regards to the prosecution of pirates and piracy by the English government, in this context particularly in the Caribbean, is that the tactics here chosen by the government have become more subtle in contrast to for example the attempt at changing the public’s perception on pirates during the trial of Joseph Dawson and the other five members of Every’s crew.

Given the circumstances the majority of pirates find themselves in, being unable to financially support themselves after the Queen Anne’s war, it becomes apparent through the chosen tactic of offering them pardons the English government plays into the narrative of portraying these pirates, to a certain extent, as victims of the shortcomings of the crown. These victims, in the perception of the public, might have been considered redeemable and deserving of mercy.

Another aspect considering the influence of narrative with regards to pirates by the English government, is that the responsibility of perception is rendered back to the pirates themselves. The English government subsequently gives these pirates the choice of either reintegrating back into ‘mainstream’ society, by accepting a pardon, or to be officially be branded as a ‘notorious’ criminal who is worthy of prosecution and punishment; hereby removing the issue of critical consideration by the public and their perception on pirates, and replacing it with this ultimatum.

Therefore it can be argued that the source displays a change of tactics by the English government with regards to changing the public’s perception on general narrative considering pirates and therefore ultimately their tactic in prosecuting pirates, in this case, specifically in the Caribbean. By offering pirates a pardon the concept of their victimhood is enhanced. Simultaneously, the responsibility of their perception of the general public is returned to the pirates themselves by giving them the choice of either accepting or refusing such a pardon. Hereby discharging the English government of the accountability and burden of attempting to influence the narrative with regards to pirates and piracy towards the public.

Conclusion

Thus, returning to the question as to what extent the legend and mythicization of Edward Teach influenced the political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy by the English, and in this case specifically English colonial, government.

Teach's case study is positioned in chronology with that of Henry Every and will therefore be viewed as such. Through the sources discussed in this chapter, we can see a continuation in the trend that had been distinguished according to Every's case study; namely, the usage of the 'pirate legend' by the government to influence the narrative considering pirates and piracy.

However, there are some diverging aspects that have been discussed. Teach's case can be viewed as a crystallization of the phenomenon of usage of the 'pirate legend' for political goals. According to the sources it has even been shown that it was used for individual, and often financial, gain.

Firstly, before looking at distinct details concerning Teach's case, it is important to evaluate the change that is made by the English government in political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy. According to the *Proclamation from the King* which was published in the London Gazette, the English government issued pardons to pirates, which would discharge their crimes. Simultaneously they continued their prosecution of the pirates who refused or neglected to take a pardon. This portrays pirates, to a certain extent, as victims of the crown's previous neglect of their sailors who had served in the West Indies during the Queen Anne's war. Yet, more importantly, it returned the responsibility of how they were perceived to the pirates themselves.

An important factor in Teach's case is the colonial government of the West Indies and the Americas, who, despite being official delegates from the English crown, would also act as a body on its own. This displays a rather more fractured and therefore distinctly different political environment compared to England. As discussed previously, colonial governors were not necessarily opposed to pirates. While they disrupted English trade, pirates were mainly beneficial to the colonial economy. However, the local residents and merchants of the colonies did suffer from piratical operations, since they were the ones who would fall prey to the pirates. Thus, there was a certain discontent between the colonial residents and the colonial governors who profited from their alliance with these pirates. Therefore, colonial governors did not feel the need to

influence the narrative with regards to pirates. The colonial residents and merchants, on the other hand, did. The trend that can be seen, when brought into context with the case of Henry Every, is that there is a more 'bottom-up' initiative to influence the narrative with regards to pirates, instead of the 'top-down' approach as seen in Every's case. This is specifically made clear through the example of the *Proclamation from Spotswood*. The grievances of the residents of North Carolina consequently resulted in their request for aid from the governor of Virginia and the expedition to capture Edward Teach.

Additionally, beside the dimension of political gain through the usage of the 'pirate legend', there is also the aspect of personal and financial gain. This has been distinguished according to *Maynard's letter*. The enhancement of Teach as the 'villainous pirate Blackbeard' was used for both personal financial gain, Spotswood's reward, and the legitimization of his actions during the expedition to capture Teach. Especially when taking into consideration that Teach, up until his final battle against Maynard, had never killed anyone.

Conclusion

Summary and answer to research question

Throughout this research there as been a continuous focus on the question as to what extent 'pirate legends' have had influence on the political decision-making of the English, and by extent English colonial, government with regards to the prosecution of pirates; and if so, what chronological trend can be established throughout the considered timeframe of the 'Golden Age of Piracy', approximately from 1694 to 1724. This has been examined according to two case studies of two individual pirates, Henry Every and Edward Teach, and their distinctive 'pirate legends' according to which they have gained their reputation and their legacy.

The general phenomenon that can be distinguished from the source analysis is that, not only was the English government influenced by the 'pirate legend' and the mythicization of pirates in their political decision-making, they actively sought to make use of it in their tactics of prosecuting pirates during the 'Golden Age of Piracy'. The overall trend that has been established and can be traced through the period of 1694 to 1724, from the mutiny of Henry Every to the first publication of *A General History of the Pyrates* by Captain Charles Johnson, respectively, shows the government's aim to influence the public's perception of pirates and piracy, since this was in their best political and financial interest, and the advancement in their tactics. This has become apparent throughout the analysis of the two case studies.

According to the case study of Henry Every, there has first been a focus on the question as to what extent his 'pirate legend' had influenced political decision-making by the English government. This issue has been addressed according to four primary sources that were produced during the period of 1694 and 1696 when Every was active as a pirate, which eventually showcased that the English government was not merely influenced by Every's 'pirate legend', but actively made use of it to influence public opinion towards pirates and piracy in general.

Among these sources were *Henry Every's Open Letter*, which gave an insight into the nuanced position Every found himself in after his mutiny at Corunna. *A Copy of Verses,* which was the first piece of information that reached London after Every's mutiny, distinctly portrays Every, and by extension, his actions as determined and rebellious against the English government.

The source that followed was *The Proclamation for apprehending Henry Every*, that displayed the response of the English government to the reprisal from the Great Mughal emperor due to Every's capture of the Ganj-i-sawai. The last source, *the Tryals of Joseph Dawson et al*, displayed perhaps best of all the main argument made throughout the case study of Henry Every. Namely the debate between the government, which attempted to force the conviction of the six pirates who sailed with Every, and the public. The rhetoric used throughout the trial displays the government's determination, and equally the failed attempts, to change the public's perception on pirates.

Due to the long term effects of Every's actions, the capture of the Ganj-i-sawai and the retaliation of the Great Mughal Emperor by closing trading posts in the East Indies to the East India Trading Company, the English government was determined to bring Every to justice. However, this proved more difficult than previously thought, since the public's conception of Every was that of a 'Robin Hood' of the sea after his mutiny in Corunna. Hereby he, either knowingly or unknowingly, embodied a sense of emancipation of the poorly treated sailors, which was common at the time. This placed him among the 'noble' pirates, along with figures like Henry Morgan and Sir Francis Drake. The analysis of the *Trials of Joseph Dawson et al.* illustrates the government's desperate attempts at forcing a conviction of Every's crew by attempting to change the public's perception of Every by using his own legend against him. As argued by various historians, they failed dismally. Despite the conviction of Joseph Dawson and five other pirates, Every and his legend remained popular. This can specifically be seen in the primary sources that were published after Every's active period, which loaned themselves as a platform for political and philosophical thought with regards to governmental structures.

Secondly, there has been a focus on whether a trend could be established considering this usage of Every's 'pirate legend'. Several authors used the setting of Every's general story as a platform for ideological and political thought, which can be seen within the sources published after Every's active period, approximately from 1696 up until the first publication of *A General history of the Pirates*. It can therefore be argued that the later primary sources still continued to contribute to the debate in the public sphere between the government and the general public with regards to both political structures and the perception of pirates.

The other case study which has been examined, and which has come to demonstrate the overall trend that can be distinguished with regards to the influence the 'pirate legend' has had

on political decision-making by the English government, is that of Edward Teach. Due to the difference in the nature of his 'legend', but also due to the fact that Teach is an individual in his own right, there has been a slight divergence in the approach taken to examine his case. Since Teach does not have a similarly strong narrative structure in his 'legend' and is more focused on his image or the persona he created for himself, there has firstly been an establishment of what this persona as Blackbeard entailed according to various historians. Therefore, the main question that arose considered the reason as to why such a distinct image was created. One of the two prominent arguments that was made, was to force merchants that were attacked by Teach and his crew into submission by means of fear. Ironically enough, this tactic supposedly actually saved the lives of both Teach's crew and that of the merchant vessel from which they stole, since a battle could often be avoided when relying on this tactic. The other reason, while a little more complex, considered the democratic relationship between pirate captain and crew. Pirate crews operated democratically in both the decisions they made and the captains they elected. This would mean that Teach was rather limited in his authority, since he had to take the wishes of his crew into strong account. It has therefore been argued that the image he created as Blackbeard was also partly created to keep his crew under control. However, the cruelties which he would have supposedly unleashed upon his crew members, are very unlikely. He would have quickly been voted down as captain, thus losing his authority.

One of the most defining aspects that could be distinguished when looking at Teach's image is the manner in which he met his end. This became apparent after analysing the chapter on Edward Teach in A General History of the Pyrates, considering this part of his 'legend' took up most of the chapter. Therefore, when focussing on the question as to what extent Teach's 'pirate legend' has had influence on political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of piracy, there has been an emphasis on primary sources detailing his capture and his death.

When looking at the previously established phenomenon of the usage of the 'pirate legend' by the government in political decision-making, we can see, according to the *Letters of Captain Maynard* and the *Proclamation from Spotswood*, an explicit use of Teach's 'legend' or mythicization by means of enhancement. As was the case with Every, the enhancement of the 'pirate legend' by government officials was mainly due to personal political or financial gain. By stressing Teach's reputation as a notorious blood-thirsty pirate, actions undertaken during his capture could be more easily legitimized. They simultaneously illustrate the overall argument

considering that Teach's legend was not only used by the pirate himself, but also by the colonial delegates of the English government for their own personal political and financial gain.

Secondly, an advancement in the tactics used by the government to influence the public's perception of pirates has been distinguished. A good example which displays such tactics is the *Proclamation from the King* published in the London Gazette. According to this proclamation the crown gave pirates the opportunity to accept a pardon, which would discharge their previous piratical crimes, within a specific timeframe. By issuing this pardon the English government dismissed itself from taking responsibility for influencing the public's perception of these pirates. Pirates who would accept a pardon could reintegrate into society, while those who neglected or simply refused to take one could be persecuted by the English government without moral scrutiny. Thus, hereby displaying an evolution in the government's tactics with regards to the prosecution of pirates.

Contribution to literature discourse

What has been seen throughout this research is that historians have often viewed sources, to a certain extent, as in a vacuum and not in relation to one another. As explained by Frohock, who wrote specifically on the usage of Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Pyrates*, historians tend to focus on one specific chapter, detailing the biography of one specific pirate and not consider the work as a whole.[139] Subsequently, these chapters have been analysed, establishing which aspects were in accordance with other primary sources and which aspects were fabrications of the author himself. Despite the fact that this manner of conducting research within the context of this specific subject is doubtlessly valuable and continues to raise interesting questions within the discourse, there might be the possibility of losing sight of a larger picture that can be distinguished when regarding primary sources in relation to one another.

For example, when looking at the *Letter from Captain Maynard* in which the demise of Edward Teach is described in vivid detail, a more adequate understanding of the source can be acquired when it is placed in the context of the *Proclamation from Spotswood*. Considering the rewards Spotswood offers individuals for capturing and killing pirates, both the enhancement of

[139] Frohock, "Satire and Civil Governance," 467.

Teach's legend, the detailed description of Teach's death and the thorough report on the number of men aboard Teach's ship, can tell us something more about Maynard's reasoning behind his actions and his choice of words when placed in context of Spotswood's proclamation.

On the other hand, some primary sources are simply used as validation for certain facts and nothing more beyond that. They are frequently mentioned by historians, yet seldomly analysed in more depth. *The Proclamation from the King* published in 1717 according to which pirates were able acquire pardons, for example, is mainly viewed as proof such pardons were indeed issued, but not what this proclamation could tell us about the government's current political thought considering piracy. This is mostly deducted from larger political structures of the time instead of the sources which have a direct connection to political decision-making with regards to the prosecution of pirates.

Throughout this research there has been an attempt to bring these specific primary sources into context with one another, deduce a deeper understanding of, and reasoning behind these primary sources. By looking at the legends and mythicization of the two pirates, Henry Every and Edward Teach, and more importantly, how they were interpreted by both the English (colonial) government at the time, meaningful insights have been gained with regards to certain political decision-making concerning pirates and piracy.

Recommendations for further research

Due to the limitations of this research, there had to be a specific selection of primary sources. Further research could therefore be done by looking at more various angles and viewpoints of other historians and/or additional primary sources in order to get a better understanding of the overall political environment in which they were produced.

For example, another source that could be taken into consideration, which might have also formed a good counter point when looking as to what extent the Every legend had influence on political decision making of the English government with regards to the prosecution of piracy, is the correspondence between the Mughal Empire and the East India Trading Company. As mentioned by both Johnson and Burgess, it was because of Every's capture of the Ganj-i-sawai, that the Mughal emperor closed of five main trading ports to the East India Trading Company and would only reopen them when Every was brought to justice; thus starting the global manhunt for Every. This viewpoint has not been explored within the context of this research, but could

potentially be a great contribution to the overall discussion considering the Every legend and the political actions undertaken by the English government with regards to piracy.

When looking at the case study of Edward Teach, the report of Ellis Brand, who led the expedition to apprehend Teach from land. As noted by Moore, this is arguably one of the more truthful accounts of Teach's capture. A possible reason for this argument is that Brand had little financial gain by filing his report, in contradiction to Maynard. It could add interesting insights with regards to the capture and demise of Edward Teach, since it could serve as either a counter or compliant narrative to the narrative in Maynard's letter. Finally, a source that could be taken into account is Spotswood's correspondence at the time. This might give more insight into his personal political environment and his relationship to other delegates of the crown.

Another aspect, as was noted by Frohock, is the significant variation in types of narrative throughout *A General History of the Pyrates*.[140] Because of the previous usage of historians of *A General History of the Pyrates*, focusing mainly on separate chapters of specific individual pirates, this has often been overlooked. Therefore, it might be interesting to analyse and compare the usage of language throughout the work; thus viewing the work as a whole, in contrast to individual chapters.

Finally, further research could be done in the broader context of this topic with regards to the usage of 'pirate legends', or even more broadly, the usage of influencing certain narratives by governments for their own political gain in the early modern period. Different geographical areas or time periods could additionally add alternative viewpoints or perspectives on this particular phenomenon.

[140] Frohock, "Satire and Civil Governance," 468.

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